

THE INFLUENCE OF FRENCH
AND ENGLISH SOCIALISM ON
THE EARLY THOUGHT OF
FRIEDRICH ENGELS AND KARL
MARX, 1835-1847

EDWARD DAVID GREGORY

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ON THE EARLY THOUGHT OF
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by

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ABSTRACT

This study reinterprets the genesis of marxism during the years 1835-47. It argues that previous accounts have mistakenly neglected the roots of Marx's and Engels' critique of contemporary society in their youthful Romanticism, and have underestimated their heavy debt to French and English socialists like Owen, Fourier, Blanc and Proudhon (among others) and to the Sismondian tradition in political economy. It also suggests that Engels' contribution in the 1840s to European socialism was at least as significant as Marx's.

Chapter 1 explores the two men's formative years, discovering the sources of their basic values in the French Enlightenment and the German Romantic movement. The second chapter reassesses their involvement with Young Hegelianism, their early debts to Hegel, and the evolution of their political opinions towards democratic republicanism. Chapter 3 examines Marx's first contacts with French socialism as editor of the Rheinische Zeitung, and the impact of Chartism and Owenism on Engels in Manchester in 1842-43. The next two chapters discuss the initial formulation of each thinker's new socialist outlook: Marx in Paris, influenced by Moses

Hess, Louis Blanc, Pierre Leroux and Victor Considerant; Engels in Manchester, influenced by the Owenite John Watts, Chartists like George Julian Harney, the Tory social critic Thomas Carlyle, and by his reading of Etienne Cabet, Charles Fourier, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Chapter 6 explores the impact of Constantin Pecqueur, Etienne Buret and the Saint-Simonians on Marx in the spring-summer of 1844, and the following chapter reinterprets the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, explaining how he found the social and economic content of his celebrated theory of alienation in the work of these and other contemporary socialists and economists.

Chapter 8 attempts to recreate Marx's and Engels' conversations in Paris in August/September 1844, and to estimate thereby the influence of Engels on Marx. Chapter 9 assesses the effect on Marx's thought of his friendship with Proudhon, his reading of Fourier and Sismondian economics, and his exploration of French Enlightenment philosophy. The continuing influence of Owen and Fourier on Engels, and his reformist strategy for social change are the themes of the next chapter, which also reinterprets The Condition of the English Working Class. Chapter 11 deals with The German Ideology, analysing the French socialist influences on the 'materialist conception of history' and clarifying Marx's defense of French socialism against German 'True Socialism' in the second volume. Chapter 12 explores the intellectual and political conflict between Marx and Proudhon in 1846-47, examining the Système des contradictions économiques as well as The Poverty of Philosophy.

The last two chapters discuss Marx's changing ideas on economics in the Arbeitslohn manuscript, his and Engels' attitude towards the bourgeoisie, their conception of "modern communism", and their typology of socialist groups and ideologies, finishing with an account of Engels' relations with the Réformistes in Paris on the eve of the Revolution of 1848.

The study concludes that Marx's thought evolved considerably during the 1840s under the influence of the French socialists he met and read during 1843-45, and then under the impact of Engels, Manchester and Ricardian economics. Engels' outlook changed less, since he fused Fourierism, Owenism and Chartism in 1843-44, and only modified it somewhat in the late 1840s under Marx's influence. Both men desired the creation of a new, comprehensive, socialist social science, but neither set out his views in a detailed and systematic fashion. Marxism, as an intellectual system, had yet to be formulated when the 1848 Revolution altered the pattern of Marx's and Engels' lives.

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NOTES

Dates are given according to the standard English method of abbreviation: day, month, year. For example, 7/6/47 means 7th June 1847.

As is usual, direct quotations are given in quotation marks. Single inverted commas normally indicate either a phrase or concept characteristically used by an author but not quoted from a specific text, e.g., 'social economy', or an idea which is in some way questionable or controversial, e.g., 'scientific socialism'. Occasionally I have wished to differentiate Marx's and Engels' usage of a term from other usages of the same words, and have then used quotation marks, e.g., "modern communism".

The term 'socialist', as used in this thesis, is broad and general, denoting any left-wing critic of capitalism/bourgeois society who accepted the label. 'Communism' is used in the early 19th C. sense, indicating a form of socialism aiming at the abolition of private property. As such, it denotes a sub-category of 'socialism' but still a fairly wide one, admitting several varieties.

The label 'Marxism' (capitalised) refers to the ideas of Marx alone, as does the adjective Marxian. 'Original marxism' means the ideas of Marx and Engels, specifically excluding subsequent accretions and interpretations by disciples or commentators. The term 'marxism' (uncapitalised) refers normally to the marxist tradition, i.e., the ideas of Marx, Engels and disciples.

INTRODUCTION

MARX THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

In the last quarter of the 19th C., French socialist intellectuals were divided over the value of marxism to the French labour movement. Some, like Gustave Rouanet, perceived it as an alien ideology, suitable perhaps for the German Social Democratic Party but quite inappropriate for Frenchmen who had their native socialist and syndicalist traditions.¹ Others -- Paul Lafargue is a good example -- recognised a non-French element in marxism, but retorted that this theory, even if Germanic in origin, was more modern and scientific than utopian French socialism which had been superceded in an age of factory industry.² Benoît Malon took a third approach to the issue. Marxism, he suggested, did represent an advance on indigenous socialist thought, largely because Marx had developed socialist economics beyond anything achieved in France, but in other respects it was simply a synthesis of

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1. Gustave Rouanet, "Le Matérialisme économique de Marx et le socialisme français", La Revue Socialiste, V & VI, no. 29 (may 1887), pp.395-422, no. 30 (june 1887), pp. 579-603, no.31 (july 1887), pp.76-86, no.33 (sept. 1887), pp. 278-294, & no.35 (nov. 1887), pp.507-531.
 2. Paul Lafargue, "Le Proudhonisme est le passé", L'Egalité (2nd series), no.14, 21/4/80; "Galerie socialiste internationale: Karl Marx", Le Socialiste, no. 12, 14/11/85.

doctrines formulated by French theorists in the first half of the century. Since marxism was thus in his opinion essentially French, Malon found no difficulty in presenting Marx as the legitimate heir to the intellectual leaders of the French left in the 1840s: Louis Blanc, Victor Considerant, Pierre Leroux, Etienne Cabet and Constantin Pecqueur.³ But was Malon deluding himself? Indeed, which of these three interpretations was closest to the truth?

Since Lenin's article "The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism" it has been a commonplace of marxism-leninism that Marx synthesised (creatively, of course) the best of German philosophy, English classical political economy, and French socialism, although Lenin actually saw the Jacobin revolutionary-democratic tradition as more influential than the visions of Fourier, Saint-Simon and Cabet.⁴ Malon and Lenin may have been right to emphasise the roots of early marxism in French socialism. But their suggestions remained unproven and there has been little interest among marxist historians in exploring in detail the debt owed by Marx, let alone Engels, to these early French theorists, perhaps because of unconscious fears that such research might reveal them to have been less original thinkers than is con-

3. Jenoît Malon, Histoire du socialisme, 5 vols, Paris, Derveaux, 1882-1885.

4. Vladimir Lenin, "The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism", Prosveshcheniye, no.3 (march 1913); translation in V. I. Lenin, Selected Works, 1 volume edition, N.Y., International Publishers, 1971, pp.20-24.

ventionally assumed.⁵ Nor, apart from George Lichtheim, has any non-marxist scholar shown more than a passing interest in the question as a whole, although there are a few articles on Marx's relationship to Proudhon and one on his alleged debt to Saint-Simon.⁶ By and large, western marxologists have preferred to speculate about the influence of Hegelian metaphysics on the 1844 Manuscripts and to debate the extent to which the later Marxian economic writings presupposed this early 'philosophy'. The lack of a thorough, scholarly investigation of the French and English socialist sources of the early thought of Marx and Engels is, I suspect, symptomatic of the generally unsatisfactory state of marxology since its inception around the turn of the century.

The number of books and articles on Marx and marxism written since 1900 must run into thousands, and one is tempted to say that too much has been written on the subject already. Yet there has been all too little work of high quality. Most of the secondary literature is polemical, the product of

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5. One exception to this generalisation is Roger Garaudy, Les sources françaises du socialisme scientifique, Paris, Editions Hier et d'aujourd'hui, 1948, but this is a disappointingly crude and shallow work written while its author was an adherent of 'official' P.C.F. marxism-leninism.
 6. George Lichtheim, Marxism in Modern France, N.Y., Columbia U.P., 1966; The Origins of Socialism, N.Y., Praeger, 1969; Georges Gurvitch, "Saint-Simon et Karl Marx", Revue Internationale de Philosophie, XIV (1960), pp.399-416; Robert Hoffman, "Marx and Proudhon: A Reappraisal of Their Relationship", The Historian, XXIX, 3 (may 1967), pp.409-430; Boris Souvarine, "P.-J. Proudhon: Cent Ans Après", Le Contrat Social, IX, 2 (march-april 1965), pp.86-94. Also, on the Marx/Proudhon rivalry, though focussed on the post-1848 period, J. Hampden Jackson, Marx, Proudhon and European Socialism, N.Y., MacMillan, 1957.

political or moral conviction rather than disinterested scholarship. Much of it is also out of date because written without knowledge of important manuscripts which have only recently become available.⁷ Still, in the last two decades there has grown up a small body of more reliable scholarly material, and it is therefore a little surprising that important aspects of 'original marxism' (by which I mean the ideas of Marx and Engels themselves, not the views of later disciples or interpreters) still remain obscure. Yet in fact there exists no adequate monograph on the evolution of Marx's views on economic problems like recessions, monetary policy and wages, and only a beginning has been made on clarifying his changing attitude to labour unions and strikes. His and Engels' personal relations with émigré European socialists in London in the wake of 1848 and 1871 have yet to be examined, and there is no full treatment of their influence on the French socialist movement between 1864 and 1895. Marx's reactions to Engels' excursions into philosophy and social theory in the 1870s still require more careful scrutiny. Engels, in particular, has been badly neglected, such that Gustav Mayer's old biography remains the best work available

7. The most notable being the Kreuznach manuscript "Aus der Kritik der Hegelischen Rechtsphilosophie", the "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahr 1844", and the Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie: Rohentwurf; other more minor pieces, previously unpublished, have been appearing in recent volumes of the East German WERKE and the Marx-Engels Collected Works.

on him in English or French.⁸ This dissertation is intended to fill another glaring gap already mentioned: the question of the influence of earlier and contemporary European socialist theorists on the genesis of 'original marxism'.

The problem, however, is not simply that insufficient research has been done. Anyone examining the secondary literature will find a host of rival and contradictory commentaries which dissolve 'original marxism' in a cloudy web of assertion and counter-assertion. A few recent works can be relied on, but so much of the ground is treacherous that one is left with no choice but to start almost from scratch in working out one's own version. And even then finding the truth is not easy -- one discovers perplexing ambiguities in the original texts and concludes that rival interpretations each had some warrant after all.

Why, then, is it so difficult to get a clear picture of 'original marxism'? There seem to be a number of reasons. Ignorance has fueled the flames of controversy and the smoke has in turn obscured the gaps in our knowledge. Another problem is the sheer size of the mountain of commentaries which

8. Henry Collins & C. Abramsky, Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement, N.Y., St. Martins, 1965; Gustav Mayer, Friedrich Engels: Ein Biographie, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1934 (English edition, N.Y., Knopf, 1936). Neither Grace Carlton, Friedrich Engels: The Shadow Prophet, London, Pall Mall Press, 1965, nor William O. Henderson, The Life of Friedrich Engels, 2 vols, London, Cass, 1976, supersede Mayer, although the latter work includes some interesting new information on Engels' business and financial affairs in the 1850s and 1860s.

offer a kaleidoscope of different images of Marx. However, this factious historiography can be comprehended historically: since Engels' death there have been twelve main trends or 'schools' of Marx-interpretation. The first, and one of the most influential pictures of Marx was that drawn by sympathetic disciples such as Wilhelm Liebknecht, Franz Mehring, Max Beer and John Spargo.⁹ Their accounts blended hagiography with the 'orthodox' social-democratic marxism created by the elderly Engels and Karl Kautsky. Ignoring the early texts that were available as "juvenilia", discounting Marx's philosophical writings, and shrugging off the embarrassing dialectical method, these books presented Marx as a 'scientific' economist dedicated to the European labour movement and possessed of a monist theory of history which proved the inevitable triumph of the proletarian revolution.

In opposition to this hero-worship, two critical versions of Marx's marxism were elaborated in the two decades before the First World War. The cruder of the two was also the more hostile. It was the work of non-socialists like Eugene von Böhm-Bawerk, Vilfredo Pareto and Joseph Nicholson, who took the orthodox interpretation largely at face-value but

9. Wilhelm Liebknecht, Karl Marx: Biographical Memoirs, Chicago, Kerr, 1901; Franz Mehring, Karl Marx: The Story of his Life, London, The Bodley Head, 1936 (first published in German in 1913); Max Beer, The Life and Teaching of Karl Marx, London, National Labour Press, 1921; John Spargo, Karl Marx: His Life and Work, N.Y., Huebsch, 1916.

differed drastically in assessing it.¹⁰ They were concerned above all to refute marxist attacks on academic social science and to demolish Marx's work in the name of more advanced sociological and economic theories. Bohm-Bawerk, for example, formulated a detailed and intransigent critique of the Marxian labour theory value from the standpoint of neo-classical doctrine. A more sophisticated reassessment of 'original marxism' was made at the turn of the century by European socialists who believed orthodox marxist theory needed substantial modification. Some of these revisionists -- Eduard Bernstein is the best-known example -- simply criticised the 'orthodox' Marx on empirical and philosophical grounds, but others, such as Benedetto Croce, Georges Sorel and Thomas Masaryk, contrasted this 'orthodox' view with their own interpretations of 'original marxism', and for a time tried to rehabilitate a more subtle Marx guiltless of intellectual 'crimes' like mechanistic materialism and economic determinism.¹¹

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10. Eugene von Böhm-Bawerk, Karl Marx and the Close of his System, N.Y., Kelley, 1949 (originally published in German in 1896); Vilfredo Pareto, Les systèmes socialistes, 2 vols, Paris, Giard, 1926 (originally published in 1902-03); Vladimir Simkhovitch, Marxism versus Socialism, N.Y., Holt, 1913; Joseph Nicholson, The Revival of Marxism, London, Murray, 1920.
 11. Eduard Bernstein, Die Vorraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie, Stuttgart, Dietz, 1899; Benedetto Croce, Historical Materialism and the economics of Karl Marx, London, MacMillan, 1914 (original Italian edition 1899); Thomas G. Masaryk, Die philosophischen und sociologischen Grundlagen des Marxismus, Osnabruck, Zeller, 1964 (originally published 1899); Georges Sorel, Saggi di critica des marxismo, Palermo, Sandron, 1902.

Three new schools of marxology emerged between the wars. The most prolific commentators at this time were communist intellectuals, who, following the lead of Nikolai Bukharin, A.M. Deborine and David Riazanov, created the marxist-leninist image of Marx and Engels as the inseparable founders of dialectical materialism.¹² Non-marxist critics of communism also went to some lengths to present marxism as a full-blown intellectual system, searching out the various ad hoc pronouncements of Marx and Engels on politics, economics and history to weld them into coherent doctrines. The work of these 'critical systemisers' -- writers like Sherman Chang, G.D.H. Cole, E.H. Carr, Sidney Hook and M.M. Bober -- refined in a more scholarly direction the earlier pictures of Marx, providing an academic media via between the marxist-leninists and the frankly hostile opponents of marxism.¹³ Georgi Lukacs and Karl Korsch, however, made a more radical reinterpretation of 'original marxism', rehabilitating Marxian

12. Nikolai Bukharin, Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology, N.Y., International Publishers, 1925; A.M. Deborine, Nikolai Bukharin, et al, Marxism and Modern Thought, N.Y., Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1935; David Riazanov, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, London, Lawrence, 1927, & Marx: Homme, penseur et revolutionnaire, Paris, E.S.I., 1928.

13. G.D.H. Cole, What Marx Really Meant, London, Gollancz, 1934; Frank M. Salter, Karl Marx and Modern Socialism, London, Macmillan, 1921; E.H. Carr, Karl Marx: A Study in Fanaticism, London, Dent, 1934; Sherman Chang, The Marxian Theory of the State, Philadelphia, U. of Pennsylvania Press, 1931; M.M. Bober, Karl Marx's Interpretation of History, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard U.P., 1927; Sidney Hook, Towards an Understanding of Karl Marx, N.Y., Schoed, 1933.

philosophy by pointing to Marx's views on ethics and epistemology.¹⁴ Their writings spearheaded a campaign by a handful of young marxist scholars for a new 'neo-revisionist' interpretation of 'original marxism' designed as a conscious repudiation of the old 'vulgar marxism' of pre-war social democrats and contemporary communists.¹⁵ Neo-revisionism was not, in fact, initially based on the discovery of new Marxian texts, but the publication in 1932 of the third volume of the Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe (which contained Marx's manuscripts of 1844) added fuel to the fires of reinterpretation, and a number of marxist writers concentrated on explaining the significance of the early Marxian texts.¹⁶ Their work constituted a revolution in Marx-interpretation, creating a new image of Marx the philosopher and humanist.

Interest in the young Marx gathered momentum after the Second World War. Henry Adams, for example, produced the first commentary in English on the 1843-44 writings, while in France Maximilien Rubel, emphasising Marx's moral vision,

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14. Karl Korsch, Marxismus und Philosophie, Leipzig, Hirschfeld, 1923; Karl Marx, London, Chapman & Hall, 1938; Georgi Lukacs, Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein, Malik Verlag, 1923.
 15. Henri Lefebvre, Le matérialisme dialectique, Paris, Alcan, 1939; Auguste Cornu, Karl Marx: l'homme et l'oeuvre, 1814-45, Paris, Alcan, 1934.
 16. Marx-Engels Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe (ed. David Riazanov, succeeded by Viktor Adoratski), Frankfurt/M., Engel, 1927-1933; Cornu, op. cit.; Lefebvre, op. cit.; Korsch, Karl Marx, op. cit.

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used them to revitalise the rather jaded French socialist version of marxism.¹⁷ At the same time, Maurice Merleau-Ponty created his "authentic marxism", based on the 1844 Manuscripts seen through the lens of existentialism.¹⁸ There was an analogous 'young Marx' revival in the U.S.A. where the ex-Trotskyist, Raya Dunayevskaya, portrayed Marx as a libertarian revolutionary equally hostile to capitalism and totalitarianism.¹⁹ Many western marxologists, however, were not impressed by this new trend. Writers like Isaiah Berlin and Karl Popper developed a very influential interpretation of Marx as a "historicist", a nineteenth-century speculative philosopher of history in empiricist disguise, whose methodological and ethical assumptions led all too easily to sanctioning totalitarian assaults on the "open society".²⁰ Other commentators -- such as Rudolf Schlesinger, Raymond Aron and Ralf Dahrendorf -- rediscovered Marx the social scientist, providing detailed scholarly assessments of his contribution

17. Henry Adams, Karl Marx in his Earlier Writings, London, Allen & Unwin, 1940; Maximilien Rubel, Karl Marx: Pages choisies pour une éthique socialiste, Paris, Riviere, 1948.

18. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Sens et non-sens, Paris, Nagel, 1948.

19. Raya Dunayevskaya, Marxism and Freedom, N.Y., Bookman Association, 1958.

20. Isaiah Berlin, Karl Marx: His Life and Environment, N.Y., Oxford U.P., 1939, & Historical Inevitability, London, Oxford U.P., 1954; Karl Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies, London, Routledge, 1945, & The Poverty of Historicism, London, Routledge, 1957.

to sociology and political economy.²¹

Many of these early trends in Marx-interpretation have, of course, continued into the 1970s. But in the last decade or so we have witnessed the emergence of several new images of Marx. There has been a tremendous resurgence of interest in the young Marx, and Marx the philosopher has come to dominate the secondary literature on 'original Marxism'. For example, orthodox communists have been moved to revise marxism-leninism to base it on Marx's humanist critique of 'alienation' under capitalism; Erich Fromm has argued that Marx's youthful insights possessed more enduring worth than his economic treatises, and Robert Tucker has suggested that a metaphysical notion of 'self-estrangement' ran like a leit-motif through Marx's oeuvre.²² Reacting against the extreme of interpretations such as these, a French communist, Louis Althusser, has attempted to re-establish 'original Marxism' as a scientific philosophy; while his disciple, Maurice Godelier, has taken this viewpoint a stage further by claiming that Marx was a structuralist who, well before Levi-Strauss, laid the elements of a thoroughly scientific analysis of human societies.²³ Other Marxologists have reacted in still

21. Rudolf Schlesinger, Marx: His Time and Ours, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963; Raymond Aron, Marxism in Sociological Thought, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965; Ralf Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society, Stanford, Stanford U.P., 1967.

22. Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man, N.Y., 1961; Robert Tucker, Philosophy and Politics in Karl Marx, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1971.

23. Louis Althusser, For Marx, Paris, Maspero, 1969; Maurice Godelier, "Structuralism, Functionalism and Marxism" in Marxism and Modern Society (ed.), 1971, in Social Science, London, Fontana, 1971.

to this highly polemical 'young Marx' versus 'old Marx' controversy, and have concentrated instead on pursuing detailed and rigorous investigations into limited aspects of Marx's intellectual universe. Scholars like Oscar Hammen, Bertel Ollman, Z.A. Jordan, Istvan Meszaros, David McLellan, Schlomo Avineri and Richard Hunt have, as a result, achieved a level of accuracy and objectivity surpassing most earlier work.²⁴ Through their monographs it is now -- for the first time -- becoming possible to achieve a balanced interpretation of 'original marxism'. But no synthesis of this research has yet been published.

Another explanation of the conflict over "what Marx really meant" lies in the political bias of some commentators. Because marxism was adopted officially as the ideology of the European socialist movement for two decades and then taken over by the Communist International, some historians have tended to foist upon Marx and Engels the particular brand of marxism propagated by one or other of these movements, and, moreover, have slipped into their accounts their personal

24. Oscar Hammen, The Red '48ers, N.Y., Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969; Bertel Ollman, Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1971; Z.A. Jordan, The Evolution of Dialectical Materialism: A Philosophical and Sociological Analysis, London, MacMillan, 1967; Istvan Meszaros, Marx's Theory of Alienation, London, Merlin, 1970; David McLellan, The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx, London, MacMillan, 1969, Marx Before Marxism, London, MacMillan, 1970, & Karl Marx: His Life and Thought, London, MacMillan, 1973; Schlomo Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1968; Richard Hunt, The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels: I, Marxism and Totalitarian Democracy, 1818-1850, Pittsburg, U. of Pittsburg Press, 1974.

evaluations of socialism or communism. To give a couple of obvious examples, reformist socialist writers presenting Marx as the founder of gradualism tend to emphasise the evolutionary, pacific and democratic elements in his writings,²⁵ while staunch opponents of Bolshevism sometimes see Marx as a wild, violent and proto-totalitarian figure.²⁶

Contemporary events have frequently had an impact on how commentators perceive Marx's and Engels' work. Such events may be political, economic or intellectual. The Russian Revolution, for example, stimulated the appearance of an image of Marx the advocate of 'permanent revolution' and chief spokesman for an elite of revolutionary conspirators prepared to employ any means to achieve their goals.²⁷ The re-emergence of a darker face of capitalism during the Great Depression revived interest in Marx the theorist of economic crises and eventual breakdown of the system.²⁸ The existentialist move-

25. Avineri, op. cit.; Michael Harrington, Socialism, N.Y., Saturday Review Press, 1972.

26. Karl Popper, The Open Society, op. cit.; Robert Payne, Marx, Simon & Schuster, 1968; Leopold Schwartzchild, Karl Marx: The Red Prussian, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1948; J.L. Talmon, Political Messianism: The Romantic Phase, N.Y., Praeger, 1960.

27. Nicholson, op. cit.; Leon Trotsky, Terrorism and Communism, Petrograd, Communist International, 1920; Vladimir Lenin, The State and Revolution and The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky, both translated in Selected Works, N.Y., International Publishers, 1971.

28. John Strachey, The Nature of Capitalist Crisis, London, Gollancz, 1935; Lucien Laurat, La Crise mondiale, Paris, Institut superieur ouvrier, 1935; Jean Duret, Le marxisme et les crises, Paris, Gallimard, 1933; William J. Blake, An American looks at Karl Marx, N.Y., Cordon, 1939.

ment in France produced, in the late 1940s, an 'existential Marx' whose early writings seemed to have anticipated the views of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre.²⁹ None of these interpretations was fraudulent, they merely selected from Marx's voluminous writings those ideas which were in accord with contemporary preoccupations.

The personal values and intellectual interests of commentators have affected their interpretations in other ways too. The focus of Marx's work changed during his life, and historians have disagreed over which periods were more valuable, or most crucial to his own outlook. Some stress the importance of his early humanism,³⁰ some the originality of his later economic analyses.³¹ Also, since Marx and Engels wrote on a range of topics within the fields of philosophy, sociology, economics, history and philosophy of history, interpreters differ concerning which facets of this comprehensive intellectual endeavour were most essential to 'original marxism'. Marx is sometimes presented as 'primarily' an economist,³² 'fundamentally' a philosopher,³³ or 'basically' a

29. Merleau-Ponty, op. cit.; Jean-Paul Sartre, "Materialisme et revolution", Les Temps Modernes, nos 9 & 10 (June & July, 1946) pp.1537-1563 & 1-32.

30. Fromm, op. cit.

31. Paul M. Sweezy, Theory of Capitalist Development, N.Y., Monthly Review Press, 1960 (first published 1942).

32. Arturo Labriola, Karl Marx: l'economiste et le socialiste, Paris, Riviere, 1910.

33. Louis Dupre, Philosophical Foundations of Marxism, N.Y., Harcourt, 1966.

sociologist.³⁴ The choice of perspective influences the final picture.

There is also a complication which may be called the 'encrustation problem'. It has become increasingly difficult to approach the Marxengelsian texts with a mind like a 'tabula rasa'. Commentators usually bring to their source materials some preconceptions concerning what they will find there, but this problem is severe in the case of 'original marxism'. It is not easy to separate it totally from later marxisms. Five main marxist schools -- the social-democratic orthodoxy of Kautsky and Plekhanov, the revisionism of Bernstein, Masaryk and Croce, the radical leftism of Rosa Luxemburg and the "generation of 1905", marxism-leninism, and the neo-revisionism of Korsch and Lukacs -- have each, in different ways, influenced the very perceptions of some commentators on the original texts.³⁵

Another problem has been the unavailability of key texts. Vital writings by Marx and Engels became accessible to scholars only well after the death of their authors, a difficulty experienced by all commentators, even those who read German. Marx's Doctoral Dissertation was published only in 1902, his important manuscript "Introduction" to Contribution

34. Maximilien Rubel, Karl Marx: Essai de biographie intellectuelle, Paris, Riviere, 1957.

35. This is particularly true of writers who are themselves marxists or marxisant, for example Raya Dunayeskaya, Henri Lefebvre, Louis Althusser, Istvan Meszaros, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Ernst Mandel.

to a Critique of Political Economy in 1903, the Theories of Surplus-Value in 1905-1910, his correspondence with Engels in 1913, the German Ideology in fragments between 1902 and 1926, the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right in 1927, the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts in 1932, the Grundrisse in 1939-1941, and Engels' Dialectic of Nature in 1927. When key pieces of the puzzle are missing it is difficult to see the picture clearly. In any case, even when available, the Marxengelsian texts are ambiguous and contradictory. The writings of two men, even close friends, composed over a half-century, are hardly likely to be completely self-consistent when viewed en bloc as a system of doctrine. Indeed, the more texts commentators had at their disposal, the more difficult they found it to present a simple image of Marx. Traditional categories like 'revolutionary', 'materialist' or 'scientific socialist' no longer seemed apt, yet newer labels like 'humanist philosopher' and 'democratic reformer' also failed to capture the spirit of Marx. In short, 'original marxism' was more complicated than most early interpreters realised, which was why their images of Marx were fragmentary and distorted.

Thus the diffuse nature of Marx's and Engels' writings has made it easy for historians to disagree, quite sincerely, about how they should be construed. Further, their own personal values, political convictions, and intellectual predilections have led these commentators to make full use of the lee-way of interpretation offered them. But what is

this 'lee-way of interpretation'? In what ways are the Marxengelsian texts ambiguous? To answer this we must look briefly at some of the controversial issues about which marxologists have quarrelled and still do quarrel.

Any writer on Marx has to decide whether he intended his scattered, ad hoc comments on philosophy, politics and history to cohere with his economic theories in an intellectual system. One should not assume a priori that Marx possessed, or even thought he possessed, a unified and comprehensive vision. He in fact made little attempt to explain how his views in one discipline entailed, or depended on, conclusions he had reached in others. This lack of clear connecting links between, say, Marxian economics and Marx's theory of history, has forced commentators to make their own decisions on how the parts of his Weltanschauung fitted together. But there are some difficult choices to be made if one sets out to reconstruct 'original marxism' systematically. Should Capital, for example, be read merely as a treatise on economic theory, or did it have a philosophical base essential to its structure and methodology, as some critics have claimed?³⁶ Did Marx retain the philosophical position he advanced in 1845, or did philosophy no longer have a place in his intellectual scheme by the 1860s? How, precisely, did he see his theory of surplus-value providing an economic proof of the class-

36. Dunayevskaya, op. cit.; Ollman, op. cit.; Meszaros, op. cit.; Tucker, op. cit.; & Godelier, loc. cit.

struggle view of history? What relationship did he envisage between the demise of the capitalist economy and the forthcoming proletarian revolution? What was the link, if any, between the theory of classes in his essays on contemporary history, and his schematic, economic approach to classes in Capital? Did he arrive at his 'class conflict' model of social history empirically, or was it a logical deduction from his analysis of economic antagonisms? Questions like these -- unresolved by Marx himself -- give good grounds for questioning whether Marx ever made much effort to integrate his ideas. It remains uncertain how satisfied Marx was that he had framed a grand theoretical system, in which philosophical insights underpinned economic theories which in turn harmonised with sociological analyses to give rise to a political strategy.

A variety of earlier and contemporary thinkers influenced Marx, especially during his formative years in the 1840s. There has been much debate among marxologists about the sources of his early philosophy, and especially about how great an impact to ascribe to the eighteenth century materialists, to the German Idealists (Kant, Fichte and Hegel), and to Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach.³⁷ On the other hand, the influence of earlier economists -- Smith, Quesnay, Sismondi,

37. Cornu, op. cit.; Dupre, op. cit.; Karl Löwith, Von Hegel zu Nietzsche, Zürich, Europa Verlag, 1941; Sidney Hook, From Hegel to Marx: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx, Ann Arbor, U. of Michigan P., 1965; David McLellan, The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx, op. cit., & Marx before Marxism, op. cit.; Dick Howard, The Development of the Marxian Dialectic, Carbondale, Illinois, Southern Illinois U.P., 1972.

Ricardo and Rodbertus -- on Marx has received comparatively little attention, although there has been some dispute over the extent to which he emancipated himself from the assumptions of classical liberal political economy.³⁸ Was Marx's concept of value significantly different from Ricardo's? And how indebted was he to the Sismondian critique of Say's Law and analysis of economic crises? These questions remain unresolved. There has been considerable controversy, too, about the sources of Marx's historical sociology, especially with regard to the doctrines of 'class-struggle' and 'ideological superstructure'.³⁹ The problem centres on weighting the influences of Saint-Simon, other French socialists, Hegel, and contemporary French historiography in the formation of historical materialism. Again, there is the issue of the effect of Feuerbach's values and methodology on Marx's early manuscripts: did Feuerbach supercede Hegel and Bauer as the young Marx's mentor, or had he emancipated himself from all such influences by 1844? The openness of questions like these indicates that historians have not yet fully sorted out the

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38. Ernest Mandel, La formation de la pensée économique de Karl Marx, Paris, Maspero, 1967; Paul Samuelson, "Wages and Interest: A Modern Dissection of Marxian Economic Models", American Economic Review, XLVII, no 6 (dec. 1957), pp.884ff; Sweezy, op. cit.; Maghnad Desai, Marxian Economic Theory, London, Gray-Mills, 1974; Paul Walton & Andrew Gamble, From Alienation to Surplus Value, London, Sheed & Ward, 1972; Joan Robinson, An Essay on Marxian Economics, London, MacMillan, 1942.
39. Rubel, Essai, op. cit.; Aron, op. cit.; Bober, op. cit.; Meszaros, op. cit.; Henri Lefebvre, Sociologie de Marx, Paris, P.U.F., 1966; Georges Gurvitch, La Vocation actuelle de la sociologie, vol 2, Paris, P.U.F., 1965.

problem: when did Marx first create something original enough to warrant the label 'marxism'?

Another problem of marxology may be summed up in the question: how many **Marxs** were there? There is much disagreement over the extent to which Marx's views changed during and after the 1840s. The nub of this issue is the problematic relationship between the humanist philosophy of the young Marx and his later 'scientific socialism'. Some critics have postulated a "radical break" between the early writings and Capital, arguing that the youthful Marx was a romantic philosopher and the elderly Marx a Darwinian positivist.⁴⁰ But commentators who accept the 'two Marx' thesis have disagreed sharply in their evaluation of each Marx; for some, the early Marxian texts were 'immature' and his real achievement was his economic theory,⁴¹ for others Marx's best insights were embodied in his youthful theory of 'alienation' and they regret that he later repudiated the idea.⁴² Critics who reject the 'radical break', on the other hand, tend to assume a fundamental unity embracing all Marx's writings. They argue that the economic theses of Capital were implicit in the 1844 Manuscripts, and, conversely, that the philosophical theses

40. Althusser, op. cit.; Tucker, op. cit.; Roger Garaudy, Karl Marx, Paris, Editions Seghers, 1964; David McLellan, The Thought of Karl Marx: An Introduction, London, MacMillan, 1971.

41. Mehring, op. cit.; Otto Ruhle, Karl Marx: His Life and Work, N.Y., Viking Press, 1928; Sweezy, op. cit.; Mandel, op. cit.

42. Fromm, op. cit.

of 1844 remained implicit in the later work.⁴³ The question, however, is complicated by the intermediary works written between the late 1840s and the early 1860s (the German Ideology to the Grundrisse), since proponents of the 'radical break' argument differ as to when the break occurred and whether the Marx of 1846, 1848, or 1859 should be included in the 'early' or 'late' categories. Some marxologists, while refusing to admit a transformation at some particular point in Marx's intellectual career, suggest that his ideas did evolve substantially. They divide his work into several periods, in the case of Louis Althusser four stages, in the opinion of David McLellan eight.⁴⁴ Other commentators reject periodisation outright, seeing in it a mistaken attempt to prove that Marx abandoned his early values.⁴⁵ But any commentator who does admit significant differences between the doctrines of the 'young Marx' and those of the sage of European social-democracy is virtually forced into a discussion of the turning-points in his intellectual life. And there is as yet no consensus on this.

At times in their lives Marx and Engels collaborated very closely, and, according to Engels, adopted a division of labour in which Marx concentrated on economic theory,

43. Meszaros, op. cit.; Ollman, op. cit.; McLellan, Karl Marx, op. cit.; Eugene Kamenka, The Ethical Foundations of Marxism, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962.

44. Althusser, op. cit.; McLellan, Introduction, op. cit.

45. Ollman, op. cit.

leaving Engels the task of popularising other marxist doctrines.⁴⁶ Did Engels accurately express Marx's views on history and philosophy? How did Marx evaluate Engels' writings on marxist theory? The issue at stake here is whether the two men's ideas should be regarded as, to all intents and purposes, identical. If so, then one may legitimately draw on Engels' writings to construct a more comprehensive account of 'original marxism'. If not, one must distinguish rigorously between Marxian marxism and Engelsian marxism. The problem can be approached from two points of view, either as a matter of methodology, or as a matter of empirical evidence. One may argue, a priori, that no two human personalities ever think exactly alike, and so their thought must always -- on principle -- be treated as independent. The rejoinder is that it is sometimes quite impossible to sort out the individual contributions of two men to a joint project, and so their conclusions belong to both equally, irrespective of who wrote a given text. If one accepts this latter reasoning, the issue becomes an empirical one: were Marx and Engels in fact such a pair of close collaborators for the length of their working lives? The answer to this question is not straightforward. It is complicated by such mundane factors as Marx's financial dependence on Engels, the fact of Marx's death a decade before Engels', the regularity of their correspondence when separated, and the varying degree of personal

46. Friedrich Engels, Anti-Duhring, English translation, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1969.

contact between the two men at different stages in their lives. So there is a substantive problem of interpretation here which no historian has yet resolved.

Marx's methodology presents another debatable question. Marx believed he had arrived empirically at his economic and historical findings, and he thought he had employed scientific methods of investigating human society. But he also claimed to have improved his analytic method by adapting the Hegelian dialectic. Following Hegel, he rejected Baconian empiricism as inadequate, unable to penetrate beneath the surface of phenomena to their core. In short, he claimed both to be a social scientist and to go beyond positivist methods. Did he put this programme into practice? Some critics answer 'no', suggesting that Marx's claim to be a dialectician was little more than rhetoric.⁴⁷ They argue that his approach was in fact quite similar to social positivists like Comte and Buckle, an interpretation based on the plausible claim that, under the influence of Feuerbach and French materialism, Marx rejected the Hegelian method as speculative and metaphysical, and, whatever he said, stayed clear of such nonsense in Capital. Yet Marx clearly believed Capital was 'dialectical' in some sense. Commentators have been unable to agree what he meant by this. Some have assumed that Marx remained a Hegelian in methodology all his life, and that, just like Hegel's, Marx's 'dialectic' was a non-verifiable 'pattern' which he imposed

47. Z.A. Jordan, op. cit.

on historical events.⁴⁸ On this view, Marx's commitment to a trans-empirical, 'dialectical' approach demonstrated that he had chosen speculative philosophy rather than reliable, factual research. Another, more plausible, explanation of the Marxian dialectic is that it was a theory of language and concepts. In Bertel Ollman's opinion Marx deployed a set of fluid, 'relational' concepts specially adapted to express his view of reality as a web of 'relations', not facts.⁴⁹ This view entailed, among other things, a quasi-Kantian epistemology and a repudiation of the fact/value distinction, so it set Marx outside the British empiricist tradition and closer to the German Idealists, but without making him a metaphysician. To sum up, then, there is still among Marx-interpreters a fundamental disagreement concerning Marx's methodology. Different critics maintain either he remained essentially a Hegelian, or he created a new, non-Hegelian 'dialectic', or he became a positivist who retained the dialectic only as a guide to research and manner of exposition.

What role did philosophy play in Marx's outlook? This is also problematic. At least five different viewpoints can be found in the secondary literature on the basic question where in the Marxengelsian texts the philosophy of 'original marxism' is to be found. Orthodox Marxist-Leninists usually claim that Marx's philosophy was expressed most fully by

48. Berlin, Karl Marx, op. cit.; Popper, Poverty of Historicism, op. cit.

49. Ollman, op. cit.

Engels in Anti-Duhring and Ludwig Feuerbach and they regard Marx's early writings as neo-Hegelian metaphysical ramblings.⁵⁰ Some marxologists adopt a diametrically opposed viewpoint, maintaining that Marxian philosophy is to be found exclusively in the pre-1848 texts because after this time Marx abandoned philosophical questions for empirical ones.⁵¹ Several more moderate interpretations have been offered between these extremes. Althusser, for example, suggests that while Marx did work out a coherent philosophical stance in the mid-1840s, he later repudiated this and, in collaboration with Engels, created the system of 'dialectical materialism' which Engels popularised.⁵² Other interpreters see a less fundamental change, arguing that Marx refined and modified his early philosophy when integrating it into his later socio-economic theories, but his opinions remained distinct from Engelsian dialectical materialism.⁵³ Others accept that the philosophical views of the elderly Marx and the elderly Engels were different, but stress that both men abandoned their early ideas, coming to dismiss them as juvenilia.⁵⁴ If this

50. T.A. Jackson, Dialectics: the logic of marxism, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1936; Howard Selsam & Harry Martel (eds), Reader in Marxist Philosophy, N.Y., International Publishers, 1963.

51. Z.A. Jordan, op. cit.; James A. Gregor, A Survey of Marxism, N.Y., Random House, 1965.

52. Althusser, op. cit.

53. Alfred Schmidt, The Concept of Nature in Marx, London, New Left Books, 1971; Nathan Rotenstreich, Basic Problems in Marx's Philosophy, N.Y., Bobbs-Merrill, 1965.

54. Godelier, loc. cit.; Stanley Moore, "Marx and the origin of dialectical materialism", Inquiry, XIV (1971) pp.420-429.

latter interpretation is correct, then there were three different 'philosophies' embedded in 'original marxism': the young Marx's, the old Marx's, and the elderly Engels'.

Related to this problem of deciding when, if at all, Marx defined his mature philosophy, is the issue what the term 'philosophy' meant to him. Engels in his later years seems to have conceived it in positivist fashion as dealing with logic and scientific method, and Marx possibly did the same. The 'young Marx', on the other hand, apparently had a dual notion of philosophy, based on the Hegelian conception of an all-inclusive system of knowledge and the Feuerbachian claim that it was a critical method designed to expose speculative metaphysics. How long did Marx retain this initial, Young Hegelian, concept of philosophy as both method and system? If he abandoned it, what did he replace it with? The answers are still in dispute. These general questions are complicated by two specific ones which have attracted much attention. How substantial was the influence of Hegel on Marx? How important was the concept of 'alienation' in Marx's thought? The opinion that Marx was a neo-Hegelian, and that Marx's philosophy is best understood through a study of his running intellectual battle with Hegel, is widespread in the secondary literature,⁵⁵ but it has been challenged.⁵⁶ Similarly, many

55. Dupre, op. cit.; Tucker, op. cit.; Gregor, op. cit.; H. Lamm, "Marx as a philosopher", Revue Internationale de Philosophie, XII (1958), pp.237-248; Lowith, op. cit.

56. Garaudy, op. cit.; Ollman, op. cit.; Althusser, op. cit.

commentators have suggested that the core of Marx's philosophy was his concept of 'alienation' which he derived, at least in part, from the Hegelian notion of 'self-estrangement'.⁵⁷ Whether the Marxian version of 'alienation' was metaphysical or empirical, and whether Marx still employed it in his later economic works, are much disputed issues. Istvan Meszaros, for example, has claimed that 'alienation' was for Marx the key concept of his lifelong critique of capitalism, possessing ontological, ethical, aesthetic, political and economic dimensions.⁵⁸ Since how to interpret the concept of 'alienation' bears on the wider question of whether Marx's later works should be read in the light of his earlier philosophical humanism, it is crucial to the task of deciding the role of philosophy within Marx's overall system. But, once again, there is no scholarly agreement on the issue.

The main bone of contention among interpreters of Marx's political thought may be summed up in the phrase "evolution versus revolution". The question is whether Marx, in later life, abandoned his youthful commitment to violent

57. Karl Löwith, "Man's self-alienation in the early writings of Marx", Social Research, XXI, no 2 (summer 1954), pp.204-230; Lloyd D. Easton, "Alienation and History in the Early Marx", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XXII (1961-62), pp.193-205; David Braybrooke, "Diagnosis and Remedy in Marx's doctrine of alienation", Social Research, XXV, no 2 (autumn 1958), pp.325-345; Tucker, op. cit.; Guy Caire, L'Aliénation dans les oeuvres de jeunesse de Karl Marx, Aix en Provence, La Pensée universitaire, 1956; Jean-Yves Calvez, La Pensée de Karl Marx, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1956; Meszaros, op. cit.

58. Meszaros, op. cit.

political revolution in favour of either a social revolution consequent on the economic breakdown of capitalism, or a peaceful transition to socialism via the election of a proletarian government at the ballot box. All three scenarios can be found in Marx's writings. Commentators have debated whether Marx changed his mind after the 1848 fiasco and thereafter placed his trust in democratic procedures, and whether he thought that different countries were likely to pursue different roads to socialism such as, perhaps, a peaceful democratic transition in Holland, economic breakdown in France, and violent upheaval in Russia. The marxist-leninist view of Marx has normally publicised him as a precursor of Lenin's insurrectionary strategy, and by and large this image of Marx the "red communist doctor" has also found favour with hostile critics concerned to prove him a harbinger of Bolshevism.⁵⁹ Recently there has been a reaction against such 'Cold War' versions of Marx, and recognition that Marx remained committed to democracy and soon repudiated his temporary quasi-Blanquist leanings.⁶⁰ The Marxian concept of 'socialist revolution', however, was as much economic as political, i.e. Marx assumed the proletarian seizure of power would be connected in some way with the demise of capitalism as a functioning economic system. Exactly how this 'breakdown' would come about and the form it would take was not crystal clear

59. Talmon, op. cit.; Schwartzchild, op. cit.; Payne, op. cit.; Nicholson, op. cit.

60. Harrington, op. cit.; Avineri, op. cit.; Hunt, op. cit.

in Marx's writings, so it too has become a subject of debate.⁶¹

The main problem here is to decide how Marx expected the economic failure of capitalism would stimulate political change. Since the revisionist controversy scholars have pondered whether Marx predicted a 'catastrophic' end to the capitalist economy. Did he believe it would shatter irreparably as a result of a severe crisis of overproduction, or did he anticipate a long period of decline with prolonged depressions, stagnation, and some partial recoveries? Furthermore, there is the issue of the exact relation between severe business slumps and the anticipated workers' revolt: did Marx ever explain how the former would cause the latter? Scholars have argued about whether Marx thought in terms of a deterministic causal chain linking economic collapse to political upheaval, and thus regarded the political revolution as an epiphenomenon of the evolution of the capitalist system, or whether -- alternatively -- he believed in a much greater degree of independence between political and economic events, so that an economic collapse might not necessarily precipitate an uprising by the proletariat, and, conversely, the political seizure of power by the workers possibly need not await an economic crisis.

This question of how Marx envisaged the proletarian revolution is one instance of a more general problem: how to

61. Sweezy, op. cit.

construe his theory of historical materialism. It has been raised by, among others, a group of critics labelled 'fundamentalists' by Bertel Ollman.⁶² They assume that the base/superstructure relationship was for Marx a direct and one-way causal sequence, i.e. that ideas and institutions were products of economic changes. Construed in this way, 'original marxism' was a brand of economic determinism, an interpretation rendered plausible by the monistic outlook implied by Marx's summary 'expose' of the doctrine in the "Preface" to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. This mechanistic, deterministic version of historical materialism has been challenged by marxologists pointing to the more flexible account given by Marx in the German Ideology. They emphasise both the reciprocal interaction between infrastructure and superstructure and the vital role played by human consciousness and volition in the creation of history by "real living men" (Marx's phrase, oft-quoted), not abstract, mechanical forces.⁶³ They normally also indicate his detailed analyses of contemporary history in the Eighteenth Brumaire and The Class Struggles in France, arguing that there is much in these

62. Ollman, op. cit. He means, in particular, Bober, op. cit.; H.B. Acton, What Marx Really Said, N.Y., Schocken, 1967, & The Illusion of the Epoch, London, Cohen & West, 1955; John Plamenatz, German Marxism and Russian Communism, London, Longmans, 1955, & Man and Society, vol 2, London, Longmans, 1963.

63. Merleau-Ponty, op. cit.; Lefebvre, Materialisme dialectique, op. cit., & Sociologie de Marx, op. cit.; Rubel, Essai, op. cit.; Ollman, op. cit.; John Lewis, The Marxism of Marx, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1972.

works to warrant his exoneration from the charge of simplistic economic determinism. There is, then, in Marx's writings some evidence for both the deterministic and non-deterministic interpretations of historical materialism.

Some critics have claimed that Marx's theory of history was not only determinist but teleological like Hegel's. Marx, they suggest, was a 'historicist', an accusation first levelled at Marx by Karl Popper in The Poverty of Historicism.⁶⁴ According to Popper, Marx was guilty of supposing he had discovered the fundamental law of historical evolution, whereas in fact such a so-called 'law' would be both logically impossible and non-falsifiable. What Marx had really done, Popper maintained, was to take over from previous speculative philosophers of history the unwarranted conviction that the course of history as a whole must be 'rational', i.e. must exhibit an intelligible developmental pattern. This view has been attacked by several scholars more sympathetic to marxism, and the issue has been much debated. In essence, it boils down to whether Marx believed he had discovered, as Hegel claimed he had discovered, a kind of philosophical 'master key' to human history, and whether Marx's overall theory of social evolution was teleological. A corollary to these questions, raised by Isaiah Berlin, is that of Marx's alleged 'inevitabilism'.⁶⁵ Berlin has argued that a teleological philosophy

64. op. cit., passim.

65. Berlin, Karl Marx, op. cit., & Historical Inevitability, op. cit.

of history entails the claim that future history is inevitable, i.e. it commits its author to a belief, acknowledged or unacknowledged, in fatalism. Accepting the 'historicist' interpretation of Marx's historiography as determinist and teleological, Berlin concludes that he was a believer in historical inevitability, and that, consequently, he denied the reality of human free-will. On this interpretation, Marx, as a result of believing he had discovered the inexorable law of societal evolution, lapsed into the role of quasi-religious prophet preaching a brand of predeterminism centred on the absolute certainty of the forthcoming revolution.

Just as Popper's 'historicist' image of Marx has been challenged, so has Berlin's 'inevitabilist' thesis.⁶⁶ Marx, some commentators argue, rejected any kind of historical inevitabilism when he stressed the crucial role of proletarian class-consciousness in the anticipated revolution and affirmed that men themselves make their own history, albeit within inherited socio-economic structures. Marx's humanism, they add, was quite incompatible with reducing men to puppets in a fore-ordained historical drama, and they point out that Marx criticised Hegel for doing just that.⁶⁷ Thus there exists, among marxologists, fundamental disagreement over this cluster of issues. For one camp, Marx was an empirically-minded social scientist, recognising human free-will,

66. David Gregory, Freedom, Inevitability and Historical Laws in Hegel and Marx, M.A. Thesis, University of Sussex, 1968.

67. Fromm, op. cit.; Merleau-Ponty, op. cit.; Lewis, op. cit.; Gregory, op. cit.

and viewing the revolution as a goal to be achieved, if at all, only by the conscious struggle of human beings themselves. For the other camp, he was a Hegel-type 'histor-icist' believing in a predetermined, inevitable demise of capitalism.

Marx set out his ideas on economics more systemat-ically and in more detail than he did his views on philosophy, history and political theory. Nonetheless, he left Capital unfinished, and certain specific issues within his system have elicited debate, particularly his explanation of economic crises and his theory of prices, wages and profits. There is a wider problem, too, which has caused controversy: how to interpret the Marxian theory of value. Commentators on Marx face two basic problems in this connection: the historical question of the extent to which Marx transformed the Ricardian ideas he inherited, and the evaluative question of how useful -- from the point of view of progress in economic theory -- his modifications were. They have tended to split along political lines in their answers. Almost all marxists have defended the originality and value of Marx's key economic con-cepts;⁶⁸ non-marxists normally minimise the magnitude of his achievement or dismiss it as no achievement at all, charac-

68. Mandel, op. cit., & An Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory, N.Y., Pathfinder Press, 1969; Pat Sloan, Marx and the Orthodox Economists, Oxford, Blackwell, 1973; Maurice Dobb, "Marx's Capital and its place in economic thought", Science and Society, XXXI, no 4 (fall 1967), pp. 527-546; Jean Juret, "Marx économiste" in Henri Lefebvre & R. Gutermann (eds), Carl Marx: Marxisme choisis, Paris, Gallimard, 1934.

terising Marx as a minor neo-Ricardian.⁶⁹ Since Marx was neither a genius nor a nonentity, neither approach is very helpful. However, a few marxologists have offered more balanced judgements, for example, Joseph Schumpeter on Marx's analysis of economic cycles and long-term theory of price, and Joan Robinson on Marx's ideas on wages and capital accumulation.⁷⁰ But there seems to be little consensus among marxologists on two other topics: Marx's explanation of recessions and depressions, and his opinion on the long-term movement of real wages. The points at issue here are (i) whether Marx was an underconsumptionist, arguing that it was in the nature of the capitalist system for effective demand to lag behind capital accumulation and productive capacity; and (ii) whether Marx believed that the existence of repeated depressions and an army of unemployed workers meant that the level of real wages under capitalism would always tend to return to a subsistence level despite the temporary successes achieved by trade-unions during phases of economic expansion.⁷¹

69. Böhm-Bawerk, op. cit.; Samuelson, loc. cit.

70. Robinson, op. cit.; Joseph Schumpeter, History of Economic Analysis, N.Y., Oxford U.P., 1954, pp.383-392, 590-598, 651-654, 747-750 & 1131-1132.

71. Sweezy, op. cit.; Desai, op. cit.; Alexander Balinky, Marx's Economics, Lexington, Mass., Heath, 1970; Fred M. Gottheil, Marx's Economic Predictions, Evanston, Northwestern U.P., 1966; Saikar Das Gupta, Marxian Economics: A Study, Calcutta, Vidyodaya, 1963; Paul Mattick, Marx and Keynes, Boston, Porter Sargent, 1969; Murray Wolfson, A Reappraisal of Marxian Economics, N.Y., Columbia U.P., 1966.

Another major problem of Marx scholarship concerns the notion of 'scientific socialism', and its relationship to Marx's moral values. It may be posed as follows: Marx's belief in socialism derived from Enlightenment humanism, but he equally firmly believed that he could predict the advent of socialism using scientific concepts and methods. Unfortunately, suggest some critics, these two beliefs are logically incompatible: marxism could be a moral critique of capitalism, or it could be a value-neutral social science, but it could not be both at once.⁷² Marx, they continue, never recognised this fact; hence the unresolved tension in his outlook between his implicit moral critique of capitalist exploitation and his claim that all his conclusions were scientifically proven. The Marxian system, they suggest, had ethical foundations which Marx only partly buried. Marx had therefore either sinned unwittingly against the fact/value distinction, or had intentionally disregarded it; if the latter was the case his conception of 'scientific socialism' was at odds with the positivist view of a social science.

Most commentators assume that Marx tried to be a good positivist but failed, that is, he tried to make marxism a 'value-neutral' science but was unable in practice to prevent

72. Z.A. Jordan, op. cit.; Kamenka, op. cit., & Marxism and Ethics, London, MacMillan, 1969; Anthony Flew, Evolutionary Ethics, London, MacMillan, 1967; T.D. Weldon, "The Union of Theory and Practice", Revue Internationale de Philosophie, XII (1958), pp.278-287.

his own values intruding into his analyses.⁷³ Bertel Ollman, on the other hand, explicitly denies Marx's adherence to this 'scientistic' doctrine, suggesting that he accepted the 'philosophy of internal relations' common to Leibniz, Spinoza, Hegel and Dietzgen which denied the naturalistic fallacy.⁷⁴ Ollman's argument, then, admits that there was an ethical foundation to Marx's work, but claims that this was, on Marx's premisses at least, quite legitimate, since he believed that all scientific knowledge was 'value-laden'. Marxist-Leninists, however, usually maintain that Marx's system was fully 'objective' and 'scientific', and reject the suggestion that it was 'value-laden' or founded on moral judgements.⁷⁵ Marx, they point out, scornfully dismissed as utopian earlier attempts to justify socialism morally, and ridiculed appeals to ethical principles as disguised expressions of class interests. Echoing Engels, they portray Marx as the Darwin of the social sciences, establishing sociology and economics once and for all on an unassailably scientific basis akin to the natural sciences. Marx had no prescriptive moral philosophy, they conclude, because he recognised the

73. Acton, Illusion, op. cit.; Tucker, op. cit.; Flew, op. cit.

74. Ollman, op. cit.

75. Heinrich Gemkow, et al, Karl Marx: Ein Biographie, Dresden, Verlag Zeit im Bild, 1968 (also English translation, same place, publisher and date); Maurice Cornforth, Dialectical Materialism: An Introduction, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1952-54; T.A. Jackson, Dialectics: the Logic of Marxism, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1936.

relativity of all ethical systems, exposing each as a form of ideology.

Marxologists have thus offered three alternative interpretations of Marx's position on science and ethics. He has been seen as primarily a moralist whose claims to be a scientist were misguided,⁷⁶ as a genuine scientist who dispassionately subjected moral phenomena to objective analysis,⁷⁷ and as a social philosopher who consciously blended empirical research and value-judgements in a non-positivist kind of social 'science'.⁷⁸ At any rate, whether he succeeded or not, Marx aspired to be both political activist and 'scientific' theorist. There was therefore a potential conflict between Marx the human being and Marx the scientist. Did this tension mar his writings? Again commentators have disagreed. Some have argued that Marx's moral values and political bias are irrelevant to the truth of his doctrines, while others have defended Marx on the grounds that all social theory is written from one perspective or another and strict 'objectivity' is impossible in human affairs.⁷⁹ Critics hostile to Marx, however, usually maintain that his system

76. Tucker, op. cit.; Kamenka, Ethical Foundations, op. cit.

77. Cornforth, op. cit.; Z.A. Jordan, op. cit.

78. Gllman, op. cit.

79. Ibid.; also, Merleau-Ponty, op. cit. On the question of 'objectivity' in history and the social sciences, see (among others) W.H. Walsh, Introduction to the Philosophy of History, London, Hutchinson, 1958.

was vitiated by the intrusion of his personal emotions, by the non-empirical character of his dialectical method, and by the speculative structure of his general theory of history.⁸⁰ They claim that Marx was therefore no social scientist but rather an ideologist, a passionate but 'unscientific' spokesman for an interest group. Rejecting as invalid the Marxian doctrine of the unity of theory and practice, they conclude that Marx was unable to reconcile successfully his dual role of revolutionary and intellectual.

Can all these controversies over how to interpret 'original marxism' be resolved? Yes and no. To a considerable degree they reflect not intractable problems of marxology but the personal values, prejudices and political commitments of the commentators. The difficulty of obtaining 'objectivity' is, of course, endemic in historiography, but it has been acute in the case of Marx-studies because of the historical link between marxism and communism. Nonetheless, to the limited degree that 'objectivity' is possible in the history of ideas, it should be obtainable -- eventually -- in the study of Marx and marxism. Yet it will not be achieved until the terms of the current disputes have been transcended. Critical categories like 'historicism' and 'inevitabilism' have now outlived their usefulness, concepts like 'dialectical' and 'contradiction' obfuscate unless given a much more detailed explication than they have yet received, and the

80. Action, Illusion, op. cit.; Popper, Poverty, op. cit.; Plamenatz, Man and Society, vol 2, op. cit.; Weldon, loc. cit.

entire 'young Marx/old Marx' debate should now be dying of exhaustion. A more painstaking, balanced and non-polemical approach to Marx is needed.

Marxologists in the 1970s, apart from profiting from earlier research, have one advantage over their predecessors: much fuller source materials. The combination of the Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe, the East German Werke, the new Marx/Engels Collected Works, and the Correspondance Marx-Engels gives relatively easy access to almost everything written by the two men during the period before 1848. The situation is less satisfactory for the years after 1848, but here too it is gradually improving. Unfortunately none of the various collected editions is a genuine 'complete works', not even the latest multi-language edition based on the holdings of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in Moscow.⁸¹ But it is to be hoped that the editors of this Collected Works will see fit to revise their procedure so far and to include all Marx's and Engels' unpublished manuscripts (including their reading notebooks). Until this is done David Riazanov's memorial, the unfinished Gesamtausgabe, will remain unsurpassed despite its age.

81. The 50 volume Marx-Engels Collected Works currently being issued jointly by Progress Publishers, Lawrence and Wishart, & International Publishers is based on recent German and Russian language editions prepared by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in Moscow. The first volumes were published in 1975 and contain a few manuscripts otherwise available only in Russian as well as much material only available previously in German; regrettably, however, the edition excludes some material included or summarised in the Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe (MEGA).

This dissertation cannot pretend to solve all the problems of interpretation raised above, although it will, I trust, cast some light on some of them. In particular, since it deals only with the years before the revolutions of 1848, it will do little to resolve the young Marx/old Marx controversy. Prima facie, however, there seems little reason to doubt that the experience of 1848-50 marked a watershed in the lives of both Marx and Engels. Not only were their revolutionary hopes crushed, they had to reconcile themselves to a distasteful émigré existence in industrial Britain. The Marx family's hand-to-mouth struggle to survive in London in the 1850s and 1860s is well-known, as is Engels' bitterness at having to pursue the business career which he had vehemently repudiated in 1845. Perhaps more important, both men lived and worked in the intellectual atmosphere of Victorian England in which scientism and Darwinism were two of the strongest currents of thought, an atmosphere very different from the Romantic and revolutionary idealism of left-bank Paris in the 1840s. Moreover, England was in these years a more prosperous and industrialised country than either France or Germany, and the British political scene was more conducive to a belief in parliamentary democracy and reformist labour unionism. Naturally, these and other factors influenced the evolution of Marx's and Engels' opinions after 1850, although to what extent has yet to be fully established. Much work therefore remains to be done on the development of 'original marxism' while its authors lived in England. But

before this reassessment can be attempted, one needs to establish firmly what views the two men held before the cataclysm of 1848. I offer the following thesis as a contribution to this latter task. It will, I hope, establish at least two things: that Engels' role in the genesis of 'original marxism' was at least as significant as that of Marx, and that the French and English 'utopian' socialists did exert a substantial influence on the early thought of both men.

CHAPTER 1

ROMANTICISM AND LIBERALISM, 1835-40

Marxism had its roots in the liberalism of the French Enlightenment and in the critique of contemporary society developed by the German Romantic movement. These were the intellectual forces which first moulded the minds of both Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the late 1830s, and from which they derived some of their fundamental values and convictions. To these influences were added, during the early to mid-1840s, the three currents already mentioned in the Introduction as sources of Marxian socialism: German Idealist philosophy, French 'Utopian' socialism, and 'classical' British political economy, in that chronological order. An adequate explanation of the genesis of 'original marxism' must weigh the influence of all five of these intellectual movements on both Marx and Engels, otherwise the interpretation is certain to be unbalanced. We must begin, then, by analysing the earliest formative influences on the thought of Marx and Engels: the Enlightenment and the Romantic movement.

Like other young German intellectuals in the late 1830s and early 1840s, Marx and Engels were conscious that they were the heirs to two apparently contradictory schools of thought: the rationalism of the French and German Enlightenments, and the later critique of this rationalism as narrow

and one-sided by German writers stressing 'feeling', 'imagination' and 'intuition'. Intellectually they were drawn to the scepticism and reasoned arguments of the philosophes and Kant, emotionally they were attracted to the poetry and passion of the Romantics. The great intellectual task of their time, they sensed, was a creative fusion of the two traditions: it was necessary to pare away the extremes and errors of both camps while retaining the valuable and original in each. Their greatest loves in literature and philosophy were authors whom they conceived as having anticipated such a fusion: Goethe, Schiller, and Hegel in the opinion of Marx; Shelley, Borne and Gutzkow, in addition, in the case of Engels. So while the early views of Marx and Engels were impregnated with Enlightenment attitudes and values, neither man viewed the Enlightenment uncritically. The same was true of Romanticism. German Romanticism was far from a homogeneous movement, and Marx and Engels shunned the most conservative, self-indulgent, and ultra-nationalistic trends, while enthusiastically embracing the individualism of Sturm und Drang and supporting the Young Germany movement in literature. Marx and Engels in short, were neither thoroughgoing rationalists nor wholehearted Romantics. In their teens, as in later years, they felt they could transcend these heritages, while retaining the best of both. What did they espouse and what did they reject in these movements? The answer to this question will provide an insight into the two men's most basic values, and also into the core intellectual problems with which they wrestled.

Marx was born and brought up in Trier in the Prussian Rhineland, a territory which had been incorporated in France during the Napoleonic era, from 1795 to 1814. Because of its recent links with France, the Rhineland was especially open to French culture, and there was much sympathy among the Rhenish middle classes for the ideas of the Enlightenment. Politically, the majority of Rhenish lawyers and businessmen supported the Prussian monarchy, which, in the wake of the Stein-Hardenberg reforms, they regarded as a progressive, enlightened constitutional monarchy capable of efficient administration and fairly sensitive to the interests of the more industrialised Rhineland. Marx's schooling, and the conversations he heard between his father and other Trier 'progressives' like Baron von Westphalen (whose daughter Marx was to marry in 1842), therefore made him familiar in a general way with the values and doctrines of the philosophes and the leading figures of the German Aufklärung. Evidence for this early intellectual orientation of Marx's is to be found in his school-leaving examination essays, in particular his remarks on the question of choosing a profession.¹

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1. None of the various "collected works" of Marx and Engels is complete. In the following footnotes I have tried, wherever possible, to provide references to both an edition giving the text in the language of the original (usually German, but sometimes French or English) and to an English translation. The Marx/Engels Gesamtausgabe (conventionally abbreviated as MEGA), Frankfurt am Main & Berlin, Institut Marx-Engels, 1927-35, includes most, though unfortunately not all, of Marx's and Engels' writings for the period 1835-48 in the original languages, and so I have used it as my principal source. To supplement
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These examination papers, written in 1835, reveal Marx to have been a child of the Enlightenment and, at the time, hostile to Romanticism. The pressing practical problem of deciding on a career was uppermost in the young man's mind at the time, and he was torn between a personal inclination towards 'belles lettres' and his father's more worldly suggestion of legal training. He selected the topic of 'choosing a profession' for his open-subject examination essay, but transformed it into a debate on the opposing claims of 'reason' and 'instinct' to guide human conduct. Marx was not unsympathetic to a Romantic approach to the problem; indeed, he declared that when making momentous decisions men should listen to the "innermost voice" of their hearts and should above all seek to remain faithful to their deepest natures. But he pointed out a difficulty which could not be avoided, and which he felt the Romantics had failed to face: how was one to determine the authenticity of this 'inner voice', how was one to distinguish it from more transient emotions? The Romantics, Marx

1. (cont'd) it I have used the Marx/Engels Werke, Berlin, Dietz Verlag, 1972-, including the supplementary volumes of materials initially excluded from the edition; this prints all texts in German. For Marx's and Engels' correspondence the most complete edition appears to be the Correspondance Marx/Engels, Paris, Editions sociales, 1971-, and except for early letters included in MEGA I have used this; these texts are in French. English references, and most translations of quotations, follow the Marx/Engels Collected Works (abbreviated to MECW), Moscow, London & N.Y., Progress, Lawrence and Wishart, & International Publishers, 1975-; this occasionally has material not in MEGA or the Werke. The numbering procedure used to designate volumes of MEGA follows that used by other Marx scholars: MEGA I, 1 (1) means series 1, volume 1, part 1.

"Sieben Abiturientenarbeiten von Marx. Trier 1835, August 10-16", MEGA I, 1 (2), pp.164-183; MECW, 1, pp.3-9 & 636-642.

thought, in their eagerness to deny the mechanistic vision of man as a rational calculating device which they ascribed to the Enlightenment, had fallen into a dangerous illusion. Their unthinking reliance on spontaneous feeling and the imagination was a spare because "what we took for inspiration can be a product of the moment, which another moment can perhaps also destroy."² In short, Romantic impulsiveness could never yield permanent, universal truths. And in any case, Marx added, many human emotions were reprehensible and could easily lead the unwary into immoral and irrational actions, deeds done from ambition or avarice which were unfree because "impetuous instinct" had overwhelmed reason and made the individual a slave to his baser passions. The only way to overcome these "warring elements" in the human soul, he concluded, was to place one's reliance on "calm reason", which, moreover, would also prevent one from undertaking tasks beyond one's powers and then sinking through failure into moody 'self-contempt'.³ The young Marx had clearly felt the temptation - and the sourness - of Romantic Weltschmerz and, for the moment, had turned his back on the experience.

This discussion of the dangers of Romanticism revealed the young Marx's image of human nature. There existed in man, he wrote in another examination paper (this time on religion), a perpetual tension between the sinful and the potentially

2. Ibid., MEGA 1, 1 (2), p. 164; MECW, 1, p. 3.

3. Ibid., MEGA 1, 1 (2), pp. 165-166; MECW, 1, p. 7.

divine. Man at his best had a passion for the good, yearned for truth, and strove for knowledge, but these admirable traits were all too often "extinguished by the flames of desire".⁴ If an individual failed to realise his potential, if he neglected to make the contribution to civilisation of which he was capable, he should first and foremost blame his own lack of control over his selfish drives. For Marx, then, man was his own worst enemy, but he could overcome his defects by subjecting his feelings to rational control. Not that the young Marx believed the calm, rational individual was capable of anything and everything. On the contrary, he also had an acute awareness of the way in which men like his father were subject to constraining material and social pressures and barriers (such as income, religion, and social status) which might severely limit their freedom of choice in marriage, career, and intellectual pursuits. Indeed the youth was fascinated by the twin problems, which already in 1835 he saw as thoroughly intertwined, of personal self-development and the relation between the individual and society. In these examination essays he stressed the vital importance of independence and liberty for the enrichment of a man's personality - the "worth" of a human character, he proclaimed, developed only through a series of free, autonomous choices in which an individual created himself.⁵ Personal freedom was thus a supreme value for the young Marx, and he believed firmly in

4. Ibid., MEGA 1, 1 (2), p. 171; MECW, 1, p. 637.

5. Ibid., MEGA 1, 1 (2), p. 166; MECW, 1, p. 7.

freedom of the will, although he saw this as endangered by man's animal-like emotional drives and curtailed by a social position branded on the individual by forces beyond his control. Still, notwithstanding these burdens, Marx's individual could in the main determine his own fate and work out his own future. The young essayist laid down two paramount goals towards which such free men should continually struggle: personal self-perfection, and the enhanced welfare of mankind.

In his notion of 'social welfare' the young Marx came close to the Benthamite 'greatest happiness' principle: "experience", he announced, "acclaims as happiest the man who has made the greatest number of people happy".⁶ He did briefly consider the possibility of a conflict between the two goals of personal development and the welfare of society, but, following Condorcet in the Esquisse d'un tableau historique du progrès de l'esprit, confidently dismissed this as impossible on the grounds that men could successfully cultivate their talents only by working for the good of their fellow men.⁷ In fact, Marx was soon to reconsider this bland assertion, and the problem of how to restore freedom to men trapped in an oppressive society was to become a dominant theme in his later writing. He could skate over the difficulty in 1835 because he was an enthusiastic disciple of Condorcet and shared his highly optimistic view of history. The goal of the entire

6. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (2), n. 167; MECW, 1, p. 8.

7. Ibid.

historical process, he assumed, was human perfectibility, that is, the continual, unending evolution of mankind through improvements in the characters and abilities of individual men. Human history was thus a progressive advance to greater knowledge, truth and morality: it was a successful struggle to overcome egoism and pride, cast off the fetters of superstition, solve difficult intellectual and technical problems, delineate a rational picture of God and man, and achieve a civilised ethics through which perfection of mind and character would at least be possible.

Along with this Enlightenment theory of progress, Marx also espoused several other intellectual positions characteristic of eighteenth-century liberalism. In political theory he was a follower of Montesquieu, arguing for the over-riding virtues of a constitutional monarchy. Like his father he admired the efficient, rational, 'enlightened' Prussia of Frederick the Great, and he regretted that the Prussian reform movement had ground to a halt, only temporarily he hoped. A strong executive was desirable in a state, he wrote in an examination essay on Augustan Rome, provided the man in power had the interests of his people and the security of his country at heart; moreover, a rational and benevolent leader was "more capable than a free republic of giving freedom to the people".⁸ The ideal political constitution, then, should reconcile executive authority with institutions like an indepen-

8. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (2), p. 170; MECU, 1, p. 642.

dent judiciary and a representative assembly. In this way, natural rights like free speech and freedom from arbitrary arrest could be safeguarded, the ruler could keep in touch with public opinion, and the citizens would benefit from personal liberty and rational laws. Without some liberal institutions, he concluded, an age could not be called happy no matter what other virtues it might possess.⁹

Marx was also in 1835, like his father, a Deist. Nominally a Protestant, he was encouraged both by his family upbringing and his schooling to be sceptical concerning Christian dogmas like the Trinity and the Immaculate Conception, and to query theological doctrines like predestination and original sin. Going further than either his teachers or his father desired, the young Marx questioned even the divinity of Christ. Yet, unless it was a cynical exercise for the benefit of his examiners, the young man still possessed his religious faith. He believed in a Deity or Providence overlooking human affairs, a God who spoke "softly but with certainty", never leaving man "wholly without a guide".¹⁰ He appears to have equated this Deity with "Nature", which is an added reason for thinking that he believed in a form of natural religion. But we lack the evidence necessary to determine whether the young Marx's God was an eternal spirit pervading the entire natural world (which would have made him

9. Ibid., MEGA 1, 1 (2), o. 169; MECW, 1, p. 641.

10. Ibid., MEGA 1, 1 (2), p. 164; MECW, 1, p. 3.

a pantheist) or a Voltairean 'Divine Artificer' who created and set in motion a rational, 'law-governed' clockwork universe. Suffice it to say, then, that Marx at the age of seventeen was primarily an Enlightenment rationalist with strong humanist ethical beliefs and moderate liberal political opinions, a youth attracted to but suspicious of Romantic literature and values.

Since the intellectual life of the Rhineland was so profoundly permeated with Enlightenment ideas, it was relatively fertile ground for Saint-Simonian propaganda in the 1830s, and Saint-Simonianism was possibly the first variety of French socialism to which the young Marx was exposed. The ideas of Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon himself, except his last important work Le Nouveau Christianisme, were scarcely socialist, and much of his thought was primarily a glorification of the new breed of industrial capitalists, but several of his disciples modified his 'system' after his death, stressing the need to organise industrial production so as to eliminate poverty and abolish exploitation of workers by the 'unproductive' elements in society.¹¹ This humanitarian concern with social problems, combined with praise for industry and commerce, appears to have received a sympathetic hearing from some of the livelier minds in the Trier intellectual community. Ludwig Gall, a

11. On Saint-Simon, see Frank Manuel, The New World of Henri-Simon, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard U.P., 1956. On the Saint-Simonians, see Sebastien Charlety, Histoire du Saint-Simonisme, 1825-64, Paris, Hartmann, 1931.

government official in the town, apparently became an ardent exponent of the new ideas in the 1820s, even publishing a brochure, Classes privilégiées et classes laborieuses, in 1834.¹² The debating club frequented by Marx's father, by his headmaster Wittenbach, and by his father's best friend Baron von Westphalen, was accused of helping Gall in his propaganda, and dissolved by the local authorities on grounds of excessive liberalism. Marx himself, in a conversation with Maxim Kovalewski in London in the late 1870s or early 1880s, recognised that he had been influenced by Saint-Simonian ideas at this time: "Savez-vous," he remarked to Kovalewski, "comment je me suis imprégné dès le début de ma vie, de la doctrine saint-simonienne? J'en suis redevable à mon beau-père, Ludwig von Westphalen".¹³

12. Ludwig Gall, Classes privilégiées et classes laborieuses, Paris, 1834.

13. Maxim Kovalewski, "Two Lives", Vestnik Evropy, LX, no. 8 (1909); quoted by Georges Gurvitch, "Saint-Simon et Karl Marx", Revue internationale de philosophie, XIV (1960), p. 400. Gurvitch's article is the only detailed attempt I know to assess the influence of Saint-Simon on Marx. He assumes, on the basis of little evidence, that Marx read Saint-Simon's major works as a schoolboy, and was heavily influenced by Saint-Simonian thought at this time and on several subsequent occasions before 1846. Frankly, this seems to me to be wishful thinking. In this and subsequent chapters I try to give a more balanced account in accord with the evidence. Briefly stated, my conclusion is that Marx did not read Saint-Simon's own works until 1846, when he was writing The German Ideology, but that he had already come across the Saint-Simonian Exposition de la doctrine de Saint-Simon in 1844, and that this had some influence on his writing in the summer and fall of that year, although not so much as some other French socialist works he read at the same time. One therefore has to distinguish between the influence of Saint-Simon himself and that of the Saint-Simonian school, which Gurvitch fails to do. Earlier Saint-Simonian influences (by master or disciples) seem to have been
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There is good reason to believe, therefore, that Marx's benefactor, Baron von Westphalen, was acquainted to some degree in the 1830s with the ideas of Saint-Simon, and that Marx was exposed to them indirectly through conversations with him. There is no evidence to reveal, however, precisely which works by Saint-Simon and/or the Saint-Simonians the Baron possessed, so it is difficult to evaluate whether the schoolboy Marx became aware of the existence of Saint-Simonian socialism as opposed to the earlier thought of Saint-Simon himself. Marx's own testimony, quoted above, is tantalisingly inconclusive. Von Westphalen may have picked up a copy of Gall's brochure, and he may have obtained a copy of Saint-Armand Bazard's lecture series, Exposition de la doctrine de Henri Saint-Simon, which was the best-known popularisation of Saint-Simonian doctrine available across the French border located but a few miles from Trier.¹⁴ Yet from what we know of his character and opinions it seems fairly unlikely that a sceptical liberal aristocrat like the Baron, whose favourite philosophes were Voltaire and Montesquieu, would have been attracted to the new religion of Bazard and Enfantin with its Romantic stress on feeling and authority. Probably, then,

13. (cont'd) slight, at least on Marx's conscious mind. To my knowledge, no one has ever attempted a detailed assessment of the influence of Saint-Simonianism or any other variety of French socialism on Friedrich Engels.

14. Doctrine de Saint-Simon. Exposition. Première Année, 1826-29, Paris, Rivière, 1924. Several editions of these lectures were published in book form in Paris in the early 1830s.

von Westphalen signalled with approval to the young Marx Saint-Simon's own most characteristically Enlightenment doctrines: the progress of history through successive 'critical' and 'organic' epochs, and the imminent creation of a comprehensive science of society. Possibly, too, he mentioned Saint-Simon's ideas on the revolutionary potential of industrialisation, the need for an organised economy run by 'les industriels' rather than the old parasitic élite, and the duty of these new 'non-political' planners of a rational, efficient society to provide education and higher living standards for the lower classes. But if these notions made any impression on Marx at all, they entered his subconscious mind; there is no trace of them either in Marx's writings in 1835 or in his work as a university student at Bonn and Berlin in the late 1830s and early 1840s.

After leaving school, Marx went to study law at the University of Bonn. Bonn was close to the commercial heart of the Rhineland, Cologne, so it is possible that Marx again came into contact with Saint-Simonian ideas there. But the Saint-Simonianism of the few Rhineland industrialists and merchants aware of the doctrine was hardly socialist: it was an energetic, paternalist, progressive, embryonically technocratic liberalism sometimes tinged with a social conscience for the victims of the industrialisation which its proponents so strongly advocated. So while these early brief encounters with some form or forms of Saint-Simonianism may have left seeds deep in Marx's brain which would germinate later under

the stimulus of Parisian socialism and Manchester's slums, it would be a mistake to conclude that Marx the student at Bonn was in any sense a Saint-Simonian. Indeed it must be conceded that, on the evidence of Marx's own writings during his university career, the conscious impact of Saint-Simon and the Saint-Simonians on Marx was zero.

Marx, as a letter written to his father in 1837 after his transfer to Berlin University reveals, was not enamoured of the study of law, although some of the time he dutifully went through the motions. But he was fascinated by drama and loved poetry. His interest in world literature seems to have been encouraged by both his father and Baron von Westphalen while Marx was still at Trier. According to the testimony of Eleanor Marx, his father read him French classics like those by Voltaire and Racine, while the Baron broadened his taste with Homer, Shakespeare and works by contemporary German romantics.¹⁵ Marx as a schoolboy was probably also introduced to some of the writings of Goethe and Schiller, who had quickly gained recognition as masters of the German language.

Bonn University was a haven of Romanticism. One popular lecturer there was the aged A.W. Schlegel, one of the leading theorists of the 'second generation' of German Romantics. Marx, though he was nominally enrolled as a law student, took an active interest in the intellectual life of the university, and attended two lecture-series by Schlegel on clas-

15. Eleanor Marx, "Karl Marx", Die Neue Zeit, (may 1883), p. 441.

sical literature. He also followed a course on Greek and Roman mythology, and one on modern art, in addition to several on law required by his father. From his choice of courses, it is clear that the young man was personally most interested in 'belles lettres' and the civilisation of the ancient world.¹⁶ He may also have sampled the kind of philosophy taught at Bonn which was as Romantic in spirit as Schlegel's lectures on aesthetics, since the philosophy lecturers were for the most part disciples of Fichte and the young Schelling.

At any rate, during his year at Bonn and his first year at Berlin, Marx immersed himself in Romantic poetry, drama and aesthetic theory. He almost certainly read many of the accepted literary masterpieces from the different phases of German Romanticism: the Sturm und Drang, Goethe's and Schiller's 'classical' period, the Jena school, the Heidelberg school, and the Young Germany movement. To judge from off-hand references in his university writings, Marx was particularly attracted to Goethe's and Schiller's early dramas, Die Räuber and Götz von Berlichingen, and also to Faust, Part 1. He apparently identified strongly with Karl Moor, the anti-hero of Schiller's Räuber, a tormented and tormentuous social outcast struggling against conventions and with his own conscience; Marx was known to his intimates by the nickname "Moor" for the rest of his life. He himself wrote a fragment of a play, Dulancem, in the Sturm und Drang mode, but most of

16. "Abgangszeugnis der Universität Bonn für Marx, Bonn 1836 August 22", MEGA I, 1 (2), p. 194; MESU, 1, pp. 657-658.

his literary productions in 1835-37 were poems.¹⁷

In style and subject-matter the young Marx's poetry was typical of the minor productions of the German Romantics: it abounded with pale maidens, wandering knights, craggy pinnacles, foaming cataracts, suicide, madness, and mystery. Two themes predominated: the lonely, bitter struggle of the outcast against his destiny and against the chains of convention, and the solace for this endless Promethean 'striving' that might be found not in religion but in human love. Marx the university student seems to have modelled himself on the contemporary image of a Byronic hero: tempestuous, dissolute, drunken, quarrelsome, careless of money and health, determined to experience life to the full regardless of the shocked judgments of his family and the local burghers. This, at least, is the picture which emerges from Marx's correspondence with his father, from his Berlin University leaving certificate with its mention of debt and indiscipline, and from Friedrich Engels' poetic description of him as a wild Young Hegelian in the early 1840s. Certainly Marx's early university career put a severe strain on his father's limited financial resources - the young Marx, like the old, was far from possessing the bourgeois virtue of thrift. Marx's poetry also makes it evident that he identified strongly with the convention-defying individualism of the Romantic hero. Not only did he view himself as a gifted, exceptional character pursuing a "stormy

17. MEGA 1, 1 (2), pp. 3-75; MECW, 1, pp. 22-24, & 517-515.

pilgrimage" of self-cultivation and self-expression, he also saw in his fiancée, Jenny von Westphalen, the twin-soul who alone could soothe his raging breast and imbue his life's quest with meaning and purpose.¹⁸ These themes emerged too in his unfinished drama, Oulanem, in which the best of the blank verse has a Jacobean ring. The volatile, imaginative protagonist, Lucindo, was portrayed by Marx as initially isolated and unsure of himself, desperately seeking his own identity.¹⁹ Later, however, he was to find self-fulfilment in his love for Beatrice, to whom he was united by a "spirit-bond", and to sense the opening of a new life in which his restless searching would find fruition.

As well as demonstrating Marx's fascination with these standard Romantic themes, Oulanem also documents his crisis of religious faith. The other main protagonist, Oulanem himself, seems to have been created with the mythical figures of Prometheus and Sisyphus in mind. His one lengthy monologue in Marx's fragment was a hymn of defiance shouted at the omnipotent creator of the universe. Angrily asserting his own freewill, emotional vitality, and independence, Oulanem cursed the deist "cold God" who had created an inexorable universe in which men are but "clock-work blind machines wound up to be the calendar-fools of Time...swept along high on Eternity's

18. "Menschenstolz" ("Human Pride"), MEGA I, 1 (2), p. 50; MECW, 1, p. 586.

19. "Oulanem", MEGA I, 1 (2), p. 61; MECW, 1, p. 591.

current to roar out threnodies to the Creator".²⁰ If Oulanem's point of view was the author's - and it seems probable - then the young Marx was already abandoning his father's deism for an atheistic, pagan humanism.

There is little doubt, then, that as a university student in Bonn and Berlin Marx committed himself emotionally and intellectually to Romantic individualism. The obsession with personal self-development, already evident in his school-boy essays, became the dominant motif of his life and writing in these years. In this, Marx merely echoed the Zeitgeist. In almost all its many phases, the German Romantic movement was preoccupied with this issue of individual self-cultivation.²¹ Many plays of the Sturm und Drang took as their theme

20. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (2), p. 68; MECW, 1, p. 599.

21. There appears to exist no adequate general treatment of the European Romantic movement as a whole, nor an adequate overview of the German Romantic movement. My usage of the term 'German Romanticism' is broad, including the late 18th C. as well as the early 19th C. As I see it, the German movement, like its counterpart in Britain, comprised several phases. The first, the Sturm und Drang, included the early works of Goethe and Schiller; the second phase (roughly the 1790s) comprised both the beginnings of Romantic 'classicism' and the early work of writers like the Schlegels, Hölderlin, Novalis, and Schleiermacher, whom I call for convenience the 'second generation' of German Romantics. Several of these men worked in close contact with each other, and have been called the 'Jena school' by some scholars. The third phase, roughly 1800-1815, was dominated by the Heidelberg and Berlin schools; the fourth phase, 1815-1830, coincided with the European 'Restoration era' in the wake of Napoleon, and was characterised by extreme aestheticism, fascination with the Middle Ages, and political conservatism; the fifth (the 1830s) was the time of the Young Germany movement, which, compared with the Romanticism of the previous three decades, marked a return towards liberalism and 'realism'.

(cont'd)

the struggle between a passionate, unfettered, creative individual and an oppressive, barren society, and proclaimed the ideal of complete emancipation of the exceptional personality from all social constraints. Indeed Sturm und Drang individualism was so intense and radical that in some of these dramas the conflict between genius and society came to be regarded as inevitable and insoluble, and the world was portrayed as a prison in which the individual was confined until his death brought liberation. Marx's youthful poems and dramatic fragments, although written several decades later than Klinger's Die Zwillinge, Goethe's Götz, and Schiller's Die Räuber, evoke this atmosphere of isolation, continual 'striving', and inevitable conflict. They, too, champion the heroic individual

21. (cont'd) This periodisation is, of course, excessively schematic, but it helps to make some preliminary sense out of what is, at first glance, a particularly chaotic and self-contradictory movement or period in the history of European thought. I would emphasise that I see the 'classicism' of Goethe and Schiller as part of the wider phenomenon of Romanticism. The so-called 'Classic versus Romantic' dispute was in fact an internal quarrel within German Romanticism, and as such should not be confused with the intellectual battle between 'classicism' and Romanticism which occurred in Britain in the late 18th C. and in France in the early 19th; here a fundamentally new movement in the history of ideas (involving a revolution in literary theory and practice) did confront -- and gradually overcome -- an older tradition, that of, say, Pope in England or Racine in France. On the different phases of German Romanticism, the topic of Romantic individualism, and the cult of self-development among German Romantics, see, among others, the following: J.-F. Angeloz, Le Romantisme allemand, Paris, P.U.F., 1973; M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, London, Oxford U.P., 1953; Lillian Furst, Romanticism in Perspective, London, MacMillan, 1969; Ludwig W. Kahn, Social Ideals in German Literature, 1770-1830, N.Y., Columbia U.P., 1938; and Walter Silz, Early German Romanticism, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard U.P., 1929.

who is absolutely free, a law unto himself, seeking to be true to his inner nature no matter what the consequences.

How strong was the imprint of this Romantic 'subjectivism' on Marx's mind? Was his Romanticism a brief, temporary phase which he repudiated when he turned to Young Hegelianism in 1840, or was it a permanent element in his psychology which would significantly affect his later thinking? I suspect that the latter was the case, and that Marx's Romantic values and ideals prepared him, psychologically and intellectually, to find much that was appealing in French socialism in 1843-45. There are, however, three different aspects to this question of Marx's Romanticism: whether he remained in an important sense a Romantic in Berlin and Cologne during the early 1840s, whether there was a significant Romantic element in the first version of marxism he created in Paris in the mid-1840s, and whether he continued to hold certain Romantic values and ideals in his later life. I am inclined to answer yes in each case. However, on the first of these issues no definitive answer is possible on the basis of what Marx wrote in the early 1840s, simply because the evidence at our disposal on Marx's intellectual evolution while a student at Berlin is insufficient. There is some evidence, and what there is points to an affirmative answer, but it is hardly conclusive.

My hypothesis is therefore that the young Marx did not immediately shed his early student Romanticism, but, on the contrary, remained vitally concerned with the cultural and philosophical problems debated within the Romantic movement.

It seems probable that in his mental evolution at Berlin he traced the same intellectual path blazed by earlier German Romantics fascinated by the problem of conflict between the creative individual and his society. I shall examine a little later the admittedly scanty evidence which points to this being so, but before doing this it is necessary to explain how the German Romantic attitude to 'individualism' changed as the movement evolved. Marx's attitude evolved too, I suspect, from that expressed in the Sturm und Drang dramas to that found in Schiller's later Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man, and then further, to the position adopted by a 'second generation' Romantic writer like Hölderlin.²² Since we cannot easily follow this line of development in the writings of Marx himself, I propose instead to look briefly at Schiller's and Hölderlin's views on the problem.

If the Sturm und Drang first dramatised the difficulty of creative self-fulfilment in a conventional, materialist society, Schiller was the man who later examined the problem in a cool, analytic fashion. He did so in the highly influential Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man, with which the young Marx was probably acquainted. A brief look at this work will provide a better understanding of the issue which so worried the German Romantics and with which Marx first wrestled as a university student. It will also explain why

22. Friedrich Schiller, On the Aesthetic Education of Man, in a series of letters, (trans. Reginald Snell), London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954; Friedrich Hölderlin, Hyperion, (trans. W. Trask), N.Y., Signet, 1965.

most Romantics - including Marx - saw philosophy, aesthetics, and politics as inextricably intertwined.

For Schiller, modern society had, since the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution, undergone a fundamental transformation. The changes in economic, social and intellectual life brought by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries he saw not as progress but as disintegration. Feudal society and culture, while authoritarian and static, had been homogeneous and unified; classical civilisation, better still, had combined social harmony with cultural creativity and freedom. Both had possessed a "communal spirit" in which every individual human being partook, and which provided him with the values and goals he needed to live a purposive, satisfying life.²³ Nowadays, Schiller lamented, this sense of belonging had been lost, with calamitous results: the human race had become fragmented, and one could no longer accurately speak of a single human nature uniting the species.²⁴ In contemporary society, he wrote, "we see not merely individual persons but whole classes of human beings developing only a part of their capacities, while the rest of them, like a stunted plant, show only a feeble vestige of their nature".²⁵ He drew a sharp contrast between these stunted modern men and

23. Schiller, op. cit., p. 36.

24. Ibid., p. 38.

25. Ibid.

the ancient Greeks, claiming that the Greek mind had been harmonious and diversified in its interests, intellectually alive but also admirably pragmatic: it possessed a totality of character which had long since vanished, replaced only by a ruinous conflict tearing apart "the essential bond of human nature".²⁶

What was the cause of this sad degeneration of the human spirit? Schiller answered that the prevalent cultural and political anarchy reflected the "selfishness" which pervaded modern life: social behaviour was now dominated by the egoistic pursuit of personal self-interest. He ascribed this anti-social individualism to two main causes: a narrowing of the mind caused by the abstract and fragmentary character of modern philosophy and science, and a disintegration of traditional social roles exacerbated by the rise of the bureaucratic state. Politics had thus been reduced to naked coercion, intellectual life to barren professionalism, social relations to a battlefield, and men to malformed, unhappy creatures functioning like cogs in a machine.²⁷ Revealing in

26. Ibid., pp. 37-38. A.W. Schlegel expressed the same contrast between the harmony and totality of the ancient Greek and the fragmentation of the modern European mind as follows: "The Greek ideal of humanity was a perfect concord and balance of all forces, natural harmony. The moderns, on the other hand, have become conscious of an inner dualism which precludes such an ideal; hence they strive in their poetry to reconcile and fuse the two worlds between which we are torn: the spiritual and the sensuous." Über dramatische Kunst und Literatur, I, pp. 24-25; quoted by Lillian Furst, Romanticism in Perspective, p. 137.

27. Schiller, op. cit., pp. 39-42.

his choice of imagery his revulsion against the new industrial society which had already sprung into existence across the Channel and in parts of the Rhineland, Schiller characterised Revolutionary Europe as "an ingenious piece of machinery, in which out of the botching together of lifeless parts a collective mechanical life results". Regretting the loss of a simpler, more traditional society, he summed up the consequences of the Enlightenment and French Revolution as follows:

State and Church, law and customs, were now torn asunder; enjoyment was separated from labour, means from ends, effort from reward. Eternally chained to only one single little fragment of the whole, Man himself grew to be only a fragment; with the monotonous noise of the wheel he drives everlastingly in his ears, he never develops the harmony of his being, and instead of imprinting humanity upon his nature, he becomes merely the imprint of his occupation, of his science...(Man's) free intelligence is restricted. The lifeless letter takes the place of the living understanding, and a practised memory is a surer guide than genius and feeling.²⁸

Schiller denied that this process of fragmentation was irreversible. The answer lay in a new kind of education: an "aesthetic education" which would re-establish the lost harmony between reason and feeling, between the analytic and the imaginative faculties of the human mind. Only when this inner harmony had been restored, he argued, would it be possible to undertake successful political and social reform, and gradually establish an organic community similar to the Greeks'. The right kind of aesthetic education would slowly create a new

²⁸. Ibid., n. 40.

social ethic in accord with which the new society could be constructed. But one could not leap stages in this long-term process, he stressed, so the first task was to create a new didactic literature which would help instil the correct moral values into the German people.²⁹

This conclusion led Schiller to reassess the moral validity of Sturm und Drang individualism, and he found it wanting. He abandoned the radical protest of Die Räuber, and in his later plays tried, like the mature Goethe, to solve the problem of the conflict between individual and society by advocating moderation, renunciation, self-control and selfless social service, the values upon which he believed the new morality would have to be built.³⁰ This 'classicist' perspective, however, found little favour with the younger generation of German Romantics; Goethe and Schiller, it seemed to them, had "sold out" by opting for society against the unconventional individual, and had become advocates of the constricting, middle-class values from which the Romantic genius was determined to escape. Yet most writers of the Jena, Heidelberg and Berlin 'schools' of German Romanticism -- Hölderlin, Novalis, von Kleist, and von Arnim, to name a few -- still

29. Ibid., pp. 45-51 & 138-139.

30. For a more detailed appraisal of the changing moral perspective in Goethe's and Schiller's dramas, see Kahn, op. cit., chapters II & III. I am indebted to Kahn for my general perspective on the conflict between individual and society in German Romanticism.

accepted Schiller's general diagnosis of the evils of contemporary life. They agreed that intellectual specialisation, egoistic moral values, and the mechanistic organisation of society effectively blocked the development of well-rounded, harmonious human personalities, and they believed that Germany suffered from the disease more acutely than any other European country.³¹ Like the Stürmer und Dränger, they also recognised as well-nigh inevitable a clash between the abnormal, creative genius and the blighted social order, often holding up Byron to demonstrate this truth. They were less united about how to cure their sick society, although in general terms they envisaged a similar remedy: the creation of a new community in which individual self-fulfilment and all-round personal development would again be possible. Most of them believed, like Schiller, that such a community had once existed in classical Greece, and hence that this social ideal was not intrinsically utopian, but they each had their own ideas on the form it should take and how it might be created. Some, following Schiller, saw aesthetics as the means of effecting a moral transformation as the prelude to a social renaissance. Others, like Hölderlin and von Arnim, looked to politics as the source of change. But while von Arnim (and in an even more extreme form Adam Müller) embraced the idea of an 'organic state' in which the individual would subordinate his life to that of the nation, Hölderlin held that all

31. Hölderlin, op. cit., p. 164.

contemporary political regimes destroyed individual freedom and must be dismantled not reinforced.³² His ideal society was in consequence almost the exact opposite of Müller's, and, like Shelley, he dreamed of a state-less, 'natural' community in which creativity would be unhampered and in which gifted individuals would find self-fulfilment through co-operation with their fellow-men. For Hölderlin the Romantic artist was entrusted with the mission of guiding the German people towards this social ideal: the rekindling of the light of ancient Greece in Germany.

Although we possess no direct evidence of the young Marx's opinions on these issues before he wrote his Doctoral Dissertation, it seems probable that he followed with great interest this debate within the Romantic movement about the fundamental difference between ancient and modern man. There are two reasons for thinking this. One is that, given Marx's undoubted interest in contemporary literature and philosophy, he could hardly have avoided the issue, which was one of the dominant concerns of German intellectuals at the time. The other is that like Hölderlin and Schiller, he seems to have found a glimpse of a solution to the problem of individual self-development in classical Greece.

Marx had learned Latin and Greek at school in Trier, and was already fond of Greek and Roman literature, in particular Homer, Aeschylus, Vergil, Cicero and Seneca. He had

32. Ibid., p. 44. On von Kleist, see Silz, op. cit., passim. On von Arnim and Müller, see Kahn, op. cit., chapter III.

specialised in classical literature (under the guidance of A.W. Schlegel) and studied Roman law at the University of Bonn. Now, in his first year at Berlin, he read Winckelmann on the history of classical art, and translated Ovid's Tristia.³³ His further study of Greek and Roman culture led him to Greek philosophy: Plato, Aristotle, and the various post-Aristotelian schools of Sceptics, Stoics and Epicureans. The lectures he attended and the students he befriended stimulated in Marx an interest in contemporary German philosophy, and he also dipped into Kant, Fichte and Schelling. He was, then, intrigued by ancient Greek philosophy and recent German Romantic philosophy, whereas Hegel initially made little impact on him; he reported to his father that the "grotesque craggy melody" of Hegel's thought did not appeal to him.³⁴

Marx's chief intellectual concern during his first year or so at Berlin was thus the same Romantic classicism which had dominated his studies at Bonn. For the most part of 1837, his intellectual diet consisted mainly of legal text-books, German history, Idealist philosophy, classical literature, and Romantic poetry and drama. The first two he studied out of a sense of duty, the third he dabbled in out of curiosity, the last two were his real loves. His first excursions in the field of philosophy were not very fruitful.

33. Marx to his father, 10-11/11/37, MEGA I, 1 (2), p. 218; MECW, 1, p. 17.

34. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (2), p. 218; MECW, 1, p. 18.

He had come to recognise the importance of Kantianism, informing his father that "it had become clear to me that there could be no headway without philosophy", but he was dissatisfied with it. Yet he had found no substitute, and, frustrated in his attempt to devise a better metaphysical system than Kant's, the young Marx again "sought the dances of the muses and the music of the satyrs", i.e., reimmersed himself in Romantic literature and the culture of the ancient world.³⁵

Following in the footsteps of Goethe, Schiller and A.W. Schlegel, Marx thus made classical culture and Romantic individualism the twin poles of his mental universe. Like them, he contrasted the ancient Greek cultural community with the immoral and atomised character of contemporary Europe, and looked upon the 'organic' Greek social life as an ideal which must be re-established. Rejecting Goethe's and Schiller's ethic of resignation, he sought, like Hölderlin, an alternative way of resolving the problem of individual self-fulfillment. By 1837 he had already discarded his earlier faith that progress would inevitably bring harmony between man and society, had embraced the Schiller-Hölderlin diagnosis of what was wrong with Germany, and had accepted the high premium the Romantics placed on aesthetic education. But like Hölderlin he too sensed that literature was not enough, that it alone would never heal the fragmented soul of modern

35. Ibid., MEGA 1, 1 (2), p. 218; MECW, 1, p. 17.

man. Yet he apparently did not adopt -- at this time -- Hölderlin's anarchistic ideal of a stateless 'natural' community, although the idea probably lodged in his unconscious mind to reappear at a later date. What then was the remedy? Marx did not know, but he thought he had a couple of clues. He had found one in the Greek polis, and he found another where he had least expected it: his law lectures. Still enrolled as a law student, he attended classes on the history and theory of law by von Savigny, a leading exponent of the 'historical' school of law, and by Gans, a liberal Young Hegelian.³⁶ Although hostile to von Savigny's conservatism, Marx learned from his lectures the close relationship between legal codes and the folkways of different national cultures, and the correlation between legal systems and the degree of socio-economic development of a given society. From Gans, his favourite professor at Berlin, he obtained an introduction to Hegel's philosophy of law, and also a critique of it from a liberal Saint-Simonian point of view. He took two courses with Gans, one on criminal law in the winter of 1836-7, and one on Prussian law in the summer of 1838.

Gans by this time had become accepted as one of the leading Young Hegelians in Berlin, and had in 1836 published a book, Rückblicke auf Personen und Zustände, in which he related his meetings with the Saint-Simonians in the late

36. "Abgangszeugnis der Universität Berlin für Marx. Berlin 1841 März 30", MEGA I, 1 (2), p. 247; MECW, 1, pp. 703-704.

1820s and early 1830s in Paris, and drew attention to the increasingly acute conflicts between the working classes and the parasitic segment of the bourgeoisie.³⁷ Sensitive to social issues, Gans' basic disagreement with Hegel was over the latter's adulation of the state as the font of rational law; legal codes, he argued, were primarily a reflection of the dominant values of 'civil society', i.e., the realm of social and economic life not controlled directly by the government. Nevertheless, Gans agreed with Hegel in viewing basic legal principles as absolute and universal, rather than the contingent products of particular cultural traditions and modes of social organisation, as von Savigny contended. Marx sided with Gans against von Savigny, although judging from his letter to his father he was initially more impressed with Hegel's philosophy of law than with Gans' criticisms. The reason, perhaps, was that in the last months of 1837 Marx studied the Hegelian system, and became partially converted to the Young Hegelian version current in Berlin. According to his own testimony, Marx at this time "got to know Hegel from beginning to end, together with most of his disciples".³⁸ This was no doubt an exaggeration, since Marx's later writings were to reveal certain limits to his knowledge of Hegel; nevertheless, Young Hegelianism was a revelation to him. It

37. Eduard Gans, Rückblicke auf Personen und Zustände, 1836; cited by George Gurvitch, loc. cit., p. 401.

38. Marx to his father, 10-11/11/37, MEGA I, 1 (2), p. 219; MECW, 1, p. 19.

provided him with a way of fusing the disparate rationalist and Romantic strains in his intellectual and emotional make-up, and it offered a temporary solution to the problem upon which his early thought centred: the relationship between individual and society.

During 1838 Marx decided to abandon his legal studies and pursue instead an academic career in philosophy. His new enthusiasm for Hegel (and for the writings of Hegelians like Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach) did not, however, turn him away from his classical studies. Indeed he decided to combine these interests by writing a doctoral dissertation on ancient Greek philosophy. Sensing that contemporary German philosophy was in a period of crisis in the wake of Hegel, he saw a parallel between the Young Hegelian movement and post-Aristotelian Greek philosophy. Intrigued by Epicurus' attempt to rewrite Greek philosophy in the shadow of Aristotle, Marx decided to make his and Democritus' views the subject of his thesis. This work would, he hoped, make his intellectual reputation and pave the way to a university chair in philosophy.

So during 1839 Marx plunged into a detailed study of the philosophy of Epicurus, Democritus and their Latin commentators, filling several notebooks with extracts and comments. These jottings confirm the strong appeal which the ancient world exercised on Marx.³⁹ There is no doubt that he

39. MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 84-144; MECW, 1, pp. 403-509. The text in MECW is more complete than that in MEGA, so subsequent references are to MECW.

thought very highly of Greek philosophy, and of Epicurus in particular. In the works of Epicurus he found the germs of what he considered the great achievement of modern German Idealist philosophy: its critique of empiricism, and establishment instead of a rational criterion of truth. Epicurus had recognised that knowledge was no mirror reflection of the external world, that cognition was dependent on conceptualisation, and that the 'process' of knowing involved the free play of the imagination as well as the "determinations" of the senses.⁴⁰ Hence, although his thought-processes seemed often crude and strange, he was on the right track in trying to save Greek thought from the excesses of Aristotelian empiricism and Democritean materialism. "Epicurean philosophy is important", concluded Marx, "because of the naiveness with which conclusions are expressed without the prejudice of our day".⁴¹

This last remark also indicates one of the things which Marx especially valued about Greek culture, its freshness and directness. Greek thought had not become abstract and schematic, cut off from the everyday world, he maintained, but still emerged from and guided practical action. Greek philosophers were looked upon as "wise men" who possessed valuable expertise, at once thinkers and doers, artists and scientists. The greatest Greek sages, he commented, "themselves are living

40. MECW, I, p. 415.

41. Ibid., p. 413.

works of art".⁴² In short, the Greeks had avoided the lamentable modern divorce between philosophy and politics and between aesthetics and daily life. Their culture possessed, as well as freshness and immediacy, the harmony and 'totality' which was so lacking in contemporary Europe.

Marx wrote his Doctoral Dissertation on ancient Greek philosophy, On the Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature, during 1840-41.⁴³ By this time he was a stalwart of the Young Hegelian movement, and so, as we shall see later, the thesis betrayed the influence on his thought of the Young Hegelian interpretation of Hegel. But it also reveals another reason why Marx was attracted to the study of Epicurus: his fascination with the freewill/determinism problem. Epicurus had been one of the first men ever to recognise, suggested Marx, that the methodological assumptions and causal concepts of natural science implied a fatalistic, materialist world-view which implicitly denied human freedom. Trying to explain why Epicurus, unlike Democritus, contended that atoms could deviate in their motion from a straight line, Marx argued that Epicurus was consciously denying determinism and postulating instead the fundamental autonomy of the atom from causal necessity. Clearly approving of Epicurus' position, Marx demonstrated that the root of

42. Ibid., p. 436.

43. Differenz der demokritischen und epikureischen Naturphilosophie nebst einem Anhang, MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 1-81; MECU, 1, pp. 25-108.

Epicurus' philosophy of nature lay in his vindication of human freewill and his repudiation of fate. To prove his point he quoted in the Dissertation the following extract from Epicurus:

Necessity, which some make the absolute master, does not exist. There are some fortuitous things, others depend on our freewill...It would be better to follow the myth about the gods than to be a slave of the heimarmene of the physical scientists. For the former allows the hope of mercy for honouring the gods, but the latter allows only inexorable necessity. But it is chance which it is necessary to assume, not God as the populace believes. It is a misfortune to live in necessity, but it is not a necessity to live in necessity. The ways to freedom remain open everywhere, numerous, short, easy. Let us therefore thank God that no-one can be held fast in life. It is permitted to subdue necessity itself.⁴⁴

Like Epicurus, then, Marx was a staunch defender of freewill. He explicitly rejected the hypothesis of universal causal determinism.

While in the last stages of preparing the Dissertation, he read, in addition to Aristotle and other Greek thinkers, Leibniz, Spinoza and Hume. He also went back to Kant and Fichte with whom he was already to some degree familiar.⁴⁵ His philosophical 'background' was thus quite wide and varied, and on the technical questions of epistemology and metaphysics with which he dealt in the Dissertation, he does not seem to

44. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 21-22; MECW, 1, pp. 42-43. I have followed the translation in Norman D. Livergood, Activity in Marx's Philosophy, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1967, pp. 72-73.

45. "Exzerptheftc aus Berlin, 1840-41", MEGA I, 1 (2), pp. 104-113.

have been a disciple of Hegel. His flat repudiation of any notion of 'necessity' governing human affairs would seem to be sufficient evidence for this. Hume, convinced that all empirical 'knowledge' was based on an assumption of causal 'necessity', had tried to demonstrate that this assumption was quite compatible with a belief in human freewill.⁴⁶ But Marx seems to have regarded this 'compatibilist' thesis as an intellectual sleight of hand; at any rate he was not persuaded that the issue could be conjured away in this fashion. Nor, as his sympathy for Epicurus' curious endowment of atoms with freewill demonstrates, was he happy with Kant's sharp divorce between the realms of phenomena and noumena, which tried to save moral freedom for men while admitting that the physical universe was bound by causal chains.⁴⁷ On this philosophical question, then, Marx was convinced (in 1840-41) that there was no via media between the determinism of the Newtonian world-view and the Epicurean repudiation of 'necessity'. He rejected Hume, Spinoza, Kant and Hegel in favour of a Romantic, perhaps Fichtean, glorification of the absolute independence and creativity of the free, sovereign individual.

Marx's Doctoral Dissertation, therefore, although it dealt with comparatively technical issues in philosophy, was an expression of the same Romantic 'subjectivism' that had

46. David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding, (1748, revised 1777), various editions, passim.

47. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, (1781), various editions, passim.

been so evident in his poetry. Apart from the creativity and total freedom of the Romantic artist, there was one other quality in this self-assertive individualism which Marx valued highly. We have already noticed it in his tragic fragment, Oulanem: defiance of God. There was a fundamental and irreconcilable antagonism, Marx claimed, between the searching, fearless, rational spirit of philosophy and the restrictive, authoritarian spirit of religious faith. "Philosophy makes no secret of it", he wrote in the Preface to his Dissertation, "the confession of Prometheus: 'In simple words, I hate the pack of gods' is its own confession, its own aphorism against all heavenly and earthly gods who do not acknowledge human self-consciousness as the highest divinity". "Prometheus", he added, was "the most eminent saint and martyr in the philosophical calendar".⁴⁸ This choice of Prometheus as a symbol for the restless, inquiring mind of man provides additional evidence for Marx's continued commitment to Romantic individualism in 1841. The fable of Prometheus defying the gods captured in a single image at least three ideas to which the young Romantic clung: the defiant and scornful independence of the unconventional rebel, a conscious repudiation of traditional beliefs (especially religious dogmas), and a desire to employ this newly won freedom in a creative project of great benefit to humanity. Prometheus was more than a rebel; for Marx, he was an original, constructive creator of a new and better society.

48. MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 10; MECW, 1, pp. 30-31.

At this point in his intellectual career Marx was thus very far from ascribing overwhelming weight to social and economic forces which might constrain the thoughts and actions of human beings. Nor was he yet interested in the effects of environment and education on the formation of the human mind. It appears, then, that under the influence of German Romantic literature and young Hegelian critical philosophy, Marx had at this time thoroughly renounced the perspectives of Enlightenment scientism to which he had been subjected at Trier. Nor, for that matter, is there any evidence in the Doctoral Dissertation that he had assimilated Saint-Simonian ideas from Gall, Gans, or any other Berlin acquaintance. Even the influence of Hegel on Marx the academic philosopher was much less marked than one might have expected of a man who, in these years, proclaimed himself to be a Hegelian. If one was asked to weigh influences on Marx in 1838-41, one would have to conclude that the two most important were still Romanticism and the ancient classics.

To summarise, Marx probably owed to the German Romantic movement his ideal of personal self-cultivation as the highest good, his conviction that the creative individual and modern society were necessarily at odds, his diagnosis that this society was fragmented and mechanistic, his admiration for the unity and harmony of Greek culture, his yearning for a new community in which a well-rounded human personality would again be possible, and his passionate vindication of human freedom and freewill in the face of scientific determinism

and materialism. But he had not embraced the thoroughgoing aestheticism of some 'second generation' Romantic artists like Görres and Brentano, nor had he adopted the political conservatism of Goethe or Müller. While repudiating the 'scientism' implicit in his earlier Enlightenment rationalism, he had retained, in a modified form, Condorcet's faith in progress and ever-increasing liberty.

During the years 1839-41 when Marx worked on his Doctoral Dissertation in Berlin, he became a personal friend of two leading Young Hegelians, Bruno Bauer and Arnold Ruge, and established a reputation as a gifted thinker and lively debater in Young Hegelian circles in Bonn and Berlin. Sometime in late 1841 or early 1842 he met briefly a young Rhenish business-apprentice turned soldier, Friedrich Engels, who had also become converted to Young Hegelianism. The two men were at this time no more than distant acquaintances, and Engels apparently made no impression at all on the young Marx. Their views on many matters were nonetheless surprisingly similar, given their rather different family backgrounds and educations. Before examining the dominant ideas of the Berlin Young Hegelian movement, and what Marx owed to it intellectually, I shall therefore look at the early career of Friedrich Engels to establish in what respects his formative years were similar to Marx's. In the case of Engels the task is made rather easier by the existence of a greater abundance of source material in the form of letters to his sister and friends and numerous articles in newspapers and literary periodicals.

Friedrich Engels was born at Barmen in the industrial Rhineland in 1820, the eldest son of a local textile manufacturer who also had a financial stake in a Lancashire cotton firm. Friedrich's parents were conservative in temperament and politics, and were respectable members of the local Pietist religious community. He was steeped while a child in fundamentalist Protestantism, from which he no doubt derived the strong moral values evident in his earliest writings. But between 1834 and 1837 he attended the Elberfeld grammar school, where the intellectual atmosphere was considerably more liberal than in his home. Here, through his history and literature teacher, J.C.H. Clausen, he came into contact with the ideas and values of the French Enlightenment and the German Aufklärung, and first became sympathetic to liberal politics. Clausen also awakened in the boy a love for poetry, in particular the writings of the German and English Romantics.⁴⁹

Neither liberal politics nor Romantic poetry was to the taste of Engels' father. He had early detected a streak of obstinacy, rebelliousness and independence in the character of his eldest son, and by 1837 had become convinced that the grammar school was doing nothing to curb these traits. In order to stamp them out he decided that the youth should forgo the dangerous temptations of the university education to which

49. Friedrich Engels, "Briefe aus dem Wuppertal" ("Letters from Wuppertal"), Telegraph für Deutschland, nos. 49, 50, 51 & 52, pp. 385-388, 393-396, 401-404, 412-415 (march 1839) and nos. 57 & 59, pp. 449-454 & 468-472 (april 1849), MEGA I, 2, pp. 22-41; MECW, 2, pp. 7-25 (Clausen reference, MEGA I, 2, p. 36; MECW, 2, p. 20).

he was looking forward eagerly, and instead enter immediately the family firm as a clerk so as to learn the business of textile manufacturing. Friedrich, who was at the time much more interested in literature than commerce, submitted unwillingly, vowing to himself that he would at least pursue an artistic career in his spare time. He consciously divided his life into two segments: an 'external career' imposed on him by social forces against which he did not yet feel confident enough to rebel, and an 'internal career' of personal self-development through literature and travel. In this way the young Engels early came to view commerce and industry, on the one hand, and the world of intellectual and artistic creativity, on the other, as polar opposites, by nature in conflict.

After a year in the family firm at Barmen, the youth's 'external career' took him to the commercial centre of Bremen as an apprentice-clerk with a merchant capitalist specialising in the export of linen. Having already seen the manufacturing side of the textile business, Engels was now trained in the marketing side. He was no more enthusiastic about the joys of business life in Bremen than he had been in the Wuppertal. He regarded clerical work as drudgery, and despised the pre-occupation with profits and social status around which middle-class life in Bremen (as in Barmen) was organised. His first published work, a poem in a Bremen newspaper, was a lamentation on the theme of the corrupting power of money. Reflecting on an acrobatic display by an Arabian troupe, he

contrasted the proud freedom of nomadic Bedouin with the lack-lustre servility of these paid performers.⁵⁰ But if he found commerce in Bremen boring and distasteful, it was still preferable to working in the family concern at Barmen which he had loathed. His hatred for his home town came through very clearly in a series of articles describing the Wuppertal which he wrote in the spring of 1839.⁵¹ The natural scenery of the area was pleasant enough, he remarked, but it was scarred by the "gloomy streets" of Elberfeld where there was no trace of the "wholesome, vigorous life of the people" existing elsewhere in Germany. Much of the town's population was drunken and demoralised. Engels had no doubt that the primary reason for this state of affairs was the factory work by which many Elberfeld families gained their livelihood. He commented that "work in low rooms where people breathe more coal fumes and dust than oxygen - and in the majority of cases beginning already at the age of six - is bound to deprive them of all strength and joy in life".⁵²

Only part of the Wuppertal's work force was engaged in factory production, but his observations convinced Engels that most of the local artisans were little better off than the factory hands. For example, the weavers were forced to slave at their looms from morning to night, their only relief

50. "Die Bedouien", Bremisches Conversationsblatt, no. 40, 16/9/38, p. 257; MEGA I, 2, pp. 7-8; MECW, 2, p. 29.

51. "Briefe aus dem Wuppertal", MEGA I, 2, pp. 22-41; MECW, 2, pp. 7-25.

52. Ibid., MEGA I, 2, p. 25; MECW, 2, p. 9.

from this monotony consisting in weekly bouts of drunkenness and religious mysticism. Probably repeating the claims of local temperance propagandists, he asserted that the demon drink was wreaking havoc with the moral and bodily health of the Wuppertal workers: "three years of such a life suffices to ruin them physically and mentally; three out of five die from consumption, and it is all due to drinking spirits".⁵³

He recognised, however, that drunkenness was merely a symptom of a more profound social problem: the unscrupulous exploitation by local manufacturers of a poverty-stricken workforce totally at their mercy. Working conditions were not only poor, he argued, but the factories were operated in a reckless manner by the proprietors, who paid little attention to safety yet made widespread use of child labour. Moreover, the adult labour-force was the victim of ruthless wage-cutting made possible by the endemic unemployment in the area. In consequence, he reported,

terrible poverty prevails among the lower classes, particularly the factory workers in the Wuppertal; syphilis and lung diseases are so widespread as to be barely credible; in Elberfeld alone, out of 2,500 children of school age 1,200 are deprived of education and grow up in the factories - merely so that the manufacturer need not pay the adults, whose place they take, twice the wage he pays a child.⁵⁴

Engels was obviously horrified at the very existence of this scene of poverty, disease, drunkenness, and child-labour, but what shocked him even more was what he regarded

53. Ibid., MEGA I, 2, p. 26; MECW, 2, p. 10.

54. Ibid.

as the thoroughly hypocritical attitude of the Wuppertal's well-respected, pious Protestant capitalists. "The wealthy manufacturers", he remarked, "have a flexible conscience, and causing the death of one child more or less does not doom a pietist's soul to hell, especially if he goes to church twice every Sunday". It was a striking fact, he added, that the Pietists among the factory owners treated their workers worst of all, paying the lowest wages on the pretext that this would deprive them of the opportunity to get drunk, but nonetheless stooping to bribery of these same workers when a new Pietist preacher was to be elected.⁵⁵

One can see why, a few years later, Engels was to feel he had found a kindred soul in the Carlyle of Past and Present.⁵⁶ His lifelong aversion to industrial capitalism clearly had roots in these childhood observations of Elberfeld factories and factory workers. However, he drew in 1839 no political, social or economic conclusions from this description of Rhineland industrial life. On the other hand, his disgust with the hypocrisy of Pietist capitalists like his father did profoundly affect his attitude towards the religion in which he had been brought up. The first intellectual drama of Engels' life was his gradual repudiation of orthodox Pietism.

55. Ibid.

56. Friedrich Engels, "Die Lage Englands. Past and Present, by Thomas Carlyle, London 1843", Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, 1844, MEGA I, 2, pp. 405-551; MECU, 3, pp. 444-468.

During 1839 Engels kept up a frequent correspondence with two school friends, the brothers Friedrich and Wilhelm Graeber, who were apparently convinced Pietists and interested in theology. His letters to them reveal a prolonged crisis of faith. Although the youth was hostile to orthodox Pietism even before he left Barmen, he was still a Christian and was searching for an alternative form of religion. The two things he found most repugnant in the Pietism of the leading Wuppertal preacher, F.W. Krummacher, were its reliance on literal readings of the Old Testament and its Calvinist theology. The problem with biblical-fundamentalism, he explained to the Graebers, was that the Bible was full of factual and logical contradictions, which was hardly surprising since it had been written by a dozen different authors. As a result, a variety of preachers and sects had emerged, each purveying a different version of Christian teaching. The only way to overcome this confusion, thought the young Engels, was to adopt a kind of "liberal supernaturalism" which would discard literal belief in the Bible, but would instead justify Christian doctrines on moral and rational grounds.⁵⁷ He was attracted to the theology of Protestant divines like K.F.U. Panier who, following Kant, sought to combine theology with philosophy.⁵⁸ Panier's 'Rationalism' was often criticised, he recognised,

57. Engels to Friedrich Graeber, 15/6/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 325; MECU, 2, p. 454.

58. Engels to Friedrich Graeber, 12-27/7/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 329; MECU, 2, p. 459.

for allowing doubt and disbelief to undermine the rock of Christian faith, but he retorted that doubt and scepticism were prerequisites of rational thought. The alternative to 'Rationalism' -- a reliance on blind faith -- entailed that God required men, whom He had endowed with reason, to believe the irrational, the absurd and the nonsensical, an alternative which to Engels was simply unacceptable.⁵⁹

In exchanging orthodox Pietism for Kantian 'ethico-theology' he had demonstrated that he was prepared to follow his reason wherever it led him, and it was to lead him eventually to atheism. He was, however, to pass through several intellectual stages before he discarded religion altogether. The "Letters from Wuppertal" demonstrate that he was still passionately concerned with theological issues in 1839 and that his abhorrence of the doctrine of predestination -- expounded by Krummacker in the pulpits of the Wuppertal -- drove him to follow the path of Abelard.⁶⁰ Krummacker based his predestinarian theology on the depravity of man, and this doctrine stuck in Engels' throat.⁶¹ He expostulated that Calvin's image of man as a corrupt marionette was totally at odds with the teaching of the New Testament wherein the apostles spoke of the "rational milk of the Gospel" showing men

59. Ibid.

60. "Briefe aus dem Wuppertal", MEGA I, 2, pp. 30-31; MECW, 2, pp. 14-15. I am here referring to the 12 C. theologian's reputed programme of subjecting all Christian doctrines to the test of logic.

61. Ibid., MEGA I, 2, p. 30; MECW, 2, p. 15.

how to overcome their propensity to sin.⁶² Discussing the issue in a letter to Friedrich Graeber, he latched on to the Romantic theologian Schleiermacher's suggestion that the sin of pride was an understandable by-product of men's attempts to model themselves on God: their hubris simply reflected their desire to improve and perfect their gifts.⁶³ This amounted to the claim that 'sin' was not only voluntary, it might even be admirable; certainly Engels could in no way bring himself to condemn the 'Promethean' in man, and his fundamental objection to Calvinism was that it denigrated the human spirit.

Wrestling with the problem of evil and the doctrine of predestination thus led him to Schleiermacher and Romanticism. But reading Schleiermacher made him question his thoroughgoing Christian rationalism. He had been in danger of forgetting, he wrote to Graeber, that "religious conviction is a matter of the heart" and that the most valuable gift Christianity had to offer was inner peace. Schleiermacher temporarily restored to Engels the faith that he had nearly lost, but even this new Romantic dimension to his Christianity did not override his scepticism towards dogma. After his first flush of enthusiasm for Schleiermacher he became more cautious in his praise, contending that while feeling and

62. Ibid., MEGA I, 2, n. 31; MECU, 2, p. 15.

63. Engels to Friedrich Graeber, 12-27/7/39, MEGA I, 2, pp. 528-529; MECU, 2, pp. 458-459.

emotion could reinforce religious belief they could not create it -- that, he remarked, would be like "wanting to smell with one's ears". He still considered that theology had to be compatible with philosophy, and that the latter, in his view the natural mental activity of any rational man, should provide the foundation for the code of morality taught in the Prussian educational system. "Without philosophy," he commented, "there is no education; without education there is no humanity; without humanity, again, there is no religion."⁶⁴ So although Engels had, in his own words, "enormous respect" for Schleiermacher, and regarded him as unquestionably a "great man", the Romantic theologian's influence on him probably did not run very deep. Still, there was only one other man living whom he rated as of "equal intelligence, equal power, and equal courage": David Strauss. Dissatisfied, by the summer of 1839, with Paniel's Christian Kantianism, Engels was looking for a more robust brand of philosophical theology. He found it in Strauss' Das Leben Jesu and Die christliche Glaubenslehre.⁶⁵

He actually discovered Strauss about the same time he was converted to Schleiermacher's religious Romanticism, that is, in June 1839, and before long he was convinced that the

64. Ibid., MEGA I, 2, pp. 526-532; MECW, 2, pp. 457-463 (quotation, MEGA I, 2, pp. 531-532; MECW, 2, p. 462).

65. Ibid., MEGA I, 2, p. 532; MECW, 2, p. 462; David F. Strauss, Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet, Tübingen, 1835-36, & Die christliche Glaubenslehre in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung und im Kampfe mit der modernen Wissenschaft, Tübingen & Stuttgart, 1840-41.

work of the two men could be combined to produce a new, non-dogmatic Christianity which would satisfy both the rational and the emotional in the human soul. "The tree of religion," he wrote to Graeber, "sprouts from the heart, overshadows the whole man, and seeks its nourishment from the air of reason".⁶⁶ He found in Strauss' works the most painstaking and courageous attempt ever made to treat the subject-matter of Christianity "scientifically", by which term he appears to have meant applying the tools of historical scholarship to the miscellaneous collection of documents which composed the Bible. This, he argued, was what Strauss had done successfully in Das Leben Jesu, an erudite and "irrefutable" book.⁶⁷ In fact what bowled him over was Strauss' demonstration that the accounts of Jesus' career in the New Testament were recreations of ancient religious myths, and that therefore Christianity should be understood as the last in a series of world religions all of which had used similar myths and symbols to express fundamental truths. Strauss, if he was right (and Engels had no doubt he was) had produced an anthropological proof for the old Deist notion of a primal 'natural religion' underlying all the different manifestations of man's religious spirit. From this time onwards Christianity was for Engels a 'myth', and all forms of dogmatic, doctrinal religion had

66. Engels to Friedrich Graeber, 12-27/7/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 532; MECW, 2, p. 462.

67. Engels to Wilhelm Graeber, 8/10/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 538; MECW, 2, p. 471.

been shown up as the nonsense they were.⁶⁸

In embracing the ideas of first neo-Kantian 'Rationalism', then Schleiermacher, and finally Strauss, Engels had moved three steps away from orthodox Protestantism. If Schleiermacher had temporarily restored the simple, emotional religious faith of his youth, Strauss soon destroyed it again, as Engels came to recognise after a few months of struggling to combine Romantic Christianity and Straussian biblical criticism. "Adios faith! It is as full of holes as a sponge".⁶⁹ Yet, even though his faith was gone, Engels still, perhaps paradoxically, regarded himself as a Christian. He had in one sense moved away from the scepticism of Bayle and Voltaire, which he now regarded as shallow and naive, back to a view of Christianity which saw miracles, cults and dogmas as integral to the religion rather than embarrassing excrescences on an otherwise rational core. So he now 'accepted' the whole of the Christian religion, not just some Kantian moral truths of which his reason approved, but interpreted Christianity as a complicated network of poetry and myth. Strauss thus provided Engels with a way of simultaneously accepting and rejecting Christianity, a means of coming to terms with his upbringing without denying it totally while yet largely nullifying its intellectual influence. In fact, at the end of 1839, he had still two further steps to take in his religious evolution:

68. Engels to Friedrich Graeber, 29/10/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 546; MECW, 2, p. 480.

69. Engels to Wilhelm Graeber, 8/10/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 471; MECW, 2, p. 471.

he had yet to work out what the Christian 'myth' really meant (i.e., what Christianity was a symbol of), and he had yet to conclude that even as a myth religion was harmful because of its social effects. These new insights he was to acquire in 1840-42 under the influence of Hegel and the Young Hegelians, in particular Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach. But before he was to embrace left-wing Hegelianism, Engels was to submit to three other significant intellectual forces which moulded his early thought in important ways. They were Romanticism, the Young Germany movement, and the radical political liberalism of Ludwig Börne.

While Engels had still accepted a form of orthodox Christianity he had been puzzled how to square his religion with his other intellectual enthusiasms; Pietism apparently damned most of his cultural heroes, even the most spiritual like Spinoza and Kant.⁷⁰ Schleiermacher helped solve this problem because Romantic Christianity seemed to him quite in tune with the cultural movement he most admired, Young Germany. Of the leader of this movement, the dramatist Karl Gutzkow, Engels remarked that his highest aim in life was to "find the meeting point between positive Christianity and the culture of our time", and he enthusiastically championed Gutzkow's plays and the work of other 'Young German' artists like the poet Karl Beck. Indeed Young Germany was for Engels the progressive artistic and intellectual movement of contemporary

70. Engels to Friedrich Graeber, 15/6/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 525; MECW, 2, p. 455.

Europe; it fused the German Romantic tradition in literature with the rationalism of the Aufklärung and a brand of moderate liberalism which he found attractive at the time. In the work of the 'Young German' artists, he proclaimed, the "ideas of the time" had "come to consciousness".⁷¹ Young Germany was in fact both a cultural and political force, and it had a newspaper, the Telegraph für Deutschland, which Gutzkow edited. Engels declared his allegiance to the cause by sending his provocative "Letters from Wuppertal" to the Telegraph in March 1839, and continued to write for it until December 1841, by which time he had evolved beyond Young Germany politically and philosophically. During these years Gutzkow's paper was Engels' best, though not his only, vehicle for the public expression of his opinions, and his articles reveal much about his literary tastes, personal values, and evolving political views.

Young Germany appealed in part to Engels because he saw it as the contemporary continuation of the German Romantic movement. It was indeed 'Romantic' in the broader sense of the word, that is, it drew on the legacies of the Sturm und Drang and the 'classicism' of Goethe and Schiller as well as the 'second generation Romanticism' of the Jena, Heidelberg and Berlin schools. In fact, Gutzkow and his friends were often highly critical of the cloudy, sentimental conservatism they detected in the writings of some 'second generation'

71. Engels to Friedrich Graeber, 6-9/4/39, WEGA I, 2, p. 503; WEGA, 2, p. 481.

poets and dramatists like Tieck and Görres. Engels agreed. In a survey of recent re-editions of German Volksbücher he criticised Görres and Tieck for ignoring the moral and political content of these old folk tales. The essay revealed both his sympathy for Romanticism and his differences with its more extreme spokesmen.⁷² The best of the Volksbücher, he agreed, possessed "rich poetic content, robust humour, moral purity...and a strong, trusty German spirit", all of which were excellent but not enough. Literary works, he claimed, should be evaluated according to their social significance as well as their aesthetic appeal: they should serve an educational function or help solve political problems. The Volksbücher were based on legends like Faust and Der ewige Jude and had originally had great value as profound expressions of the nobility and independence of the human spirit, serving as moral and political educators of the peasantry. Now, on the other hand, many of them had degenerated into superstitious fairy tales permeated with aristocratic values, such that they had become harmful and needed to be rewritten.⁷³ Modern, not medieval, Volksbücher were required, and to illustrate what he meant Engels singled out Griseldis, a Romance tale with a suffering woman heroine. The book, he remarked, was a fine

72. "Die deutschen Volksbücher" ("German Volksbücher"), Telegraph für Deutschland, nos. 186, 188, 189, 190 & 191 (November 1839), pp. 1481-1484, 1501-1502, 1509-1512, 1518-1519 & 1526-1528, MEGA I, 2, pp. 49-56; MECW, 2, pp. 32-40.

73. Ibid., MEGA I, 2, p. 49; MECW, 2, pp. 32-33.

illustration of the Medieval attitude to religion, but as it stood had minimal relevance to contemporary Germany. "Griseldis is to remain a popular book," he added wryly, "I see it as a petition to the High German Federal Assembly for the emancipation of women".⁷⁴

As this article on Volksbücher indicates, Engels' criticism of the 'second generation' of German Romanticism was political, not aesthetic. He valued the German popular tales highly for their imaginative content and poetic beauty, but he wanted these artistic qualities to be placed in the service of liberalism rather than conservatism. In brief, Engels' Romanticism, like that of Young Germany as a whole, was a democratic, nationalist brand not unlike Mazzini's. Not surprisingly, he admired German writers whose values and style were Romantic but whose politics were liberal. Schiller was one who fitted the bill. "It is now settled", he told Wilhelm Graeber, "that Schiller is our greatest liberal poet", and quoted with approval an ode by Karl Beck to Schiller praising him as "the Prophet who carried Freedom's flag before the rest".⁷⁵ Schiller, continued Engels, had sensed the dawning of a "new era" after the French Revolution, and had embraced the cause of liberty with heart and soul, only to have the political message in his works misunderstood and spurned by an audience interested only in aesthetics.⁷⁶

74. Ibid., MEGA I, 2, p. 54; MECW, 2, p. 37.

75. Engels to Wilhelm Graeber, 30/7/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 537; MECW, 2, p. 468.

76. Ibid.

He lamented that Goethe, on the other hand, had remained hostile to liberalism even after the signal of July 1830; he had "retired into his room and shut the door so as to remain comfortable".⁷⁷ This despicably conservative behaviour was a severe disappointment to the young Engels; although it was partly explicable by Goethe's age and secure position in Weimar, he thought it nevertheless detracted from the man's greatness, and accounted for the decline in the quality of his literary work in his later years. Engels greatly admired certain of Goethe's writings, reserving a special place in his literary pantheon for Part I of Faust. Like the young Marx, he was attracted in particular to the younger, rebellious Goethe, who in Götz, Werther, and Faust, Part I had given expression to extreme Romantic individualism; but he was not so keen on Goethe's later 'classicist' writings, and he thought the way Faust had been completed (in Part II) by the elderly Goethe was a mistake. He went so far as to suggest that the leading dramatist of Young Germany, Karl Gutzkow, should rewrite Part II because, as he put it, "the true second part of Faust - Faust no longer an egoist but sacrificing himself for mankind - has yet to be written".⁷⁸ As this remark shows, the young Engels was interested in the same Romantic theme which preoccupied the young Marx in these years: the

77. Ibid., MEGA I, 2, pp. 537-538; MECW, 2, p. 468.

78. Engels to Wilhelm Graeber, 13-20/11/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 548; MECW, 2, pp. 481-482.

question of personal self-development (the theme of Faust) and how to reconcile this legitimate desire with the welfare of society as a whole. In 1839 he had yet to come up with any solution, but he hoped that Young Germany, with its fusion of Romantic values and liberal politics, might provide an answer in the near future.

Young Germany, then, was for Engels the literary heir to German Romanticism, and was now "enthroned as queen of modern German literature".⁷⁹ The greatest Romantic writers, he thought, were, apart from Goethe and Schiller, the English poets Byron and Shelley. They too had successfully combined progressive views in politics with a poetic grasp of the imaginative and emotional side of man. Engels, as we have seen in his views on religion, put a high value on reason, but he equally stressed (as his attraction to Schleiermacher indicated) the importance of 'feeling'. He also looked upon the German Romantics Tieck, Rückert and Uhland as poets of the highest calibre, and thought that in addition to his literary mentor, Karl Gutzkow, the Young Germany movement had produced in Karl Beck, Ferdinand Freiligrath and Julius Mosen, three worthy successors to the older Romantic artists. An early poem he himself published in Der Bremer Stadtbote provides additional proof of the value he attached to the non-rational side of human life: it was an invocation to emotional sensitivity as the key to comprehending the world. "The man is

79. Engels to Wilhelm Graeber, 30/7/39, MEGA I, 2, pp. 534-535; MECW, 2, p. 465.

lost", he wrote in the final stanza, "who hears his own heart's voice and spurns it, wilfully misapprehending..."⁸⁰

There is no question, then, that there was a strong romantic element in the personality of the youthful Engels, just as there was a strong rationalist element. The writers he admired most of all were those, like Schiller, whom he felt had fused feeling and reason in their work: Shelley, Ludwig Börne, and Karl Gutzkow. The Shelley who particularly appealed to Engels was the young Shelley of Queen Mab, that is, the passionate and angry republican democrat whose poems and pamphlets savaged Christianity, Privilege and Monarchy and whose main intellectual influences were Godwin, Condorcet and D'Holbach.⁸¹ Engels saw in Shelley an almost perfect blend of rigorous, radical thinking and wholehearted emotional commitment to the cause of 'Freedom'. He translated several of Shelley's verses, and, along with a friend who was translating Queen Mab, tried unsuccessfully to have these published in 1840. He also wrote a poem of his own, entitled "An Evening", which echoed the early Shelley's blend of political radicalism and Romantic idealism.⁸² Like Shelley's, too, Engels' indictment

80. "Bücherweisheit" ("Book Wisdom"), Der Bremer Stadtbote, no. 8, 24/3/39, MEGA 1, 2, p. 580; MECW, 2, pp. 6 & 419.

81. On Shelley's views when he wrote Queen Mab, see Kenneth N. Cameron, The Young Shelley: Genesis of a Radical, N.Y., Macmillan, 1950.

82. "Ein Abend" ("An Evening"), Telegraph für Deutschland, no. 125 (August 1840), pp. 498-500, MEGA 1, 2, pp. 34-85; MECW, 2, p. 109.

of the established order extended beyond political tyranny to social inequality. His experience at Bremen had left him with no love for the "greedy merchant" whom he had been forced to observe at close quarters, and he already saw avarice and inequality as reprehensible features of contemporary life to be expunged from the free and enlightened society of the future. However, in July 1840, when he wrote "An Evening", Engels was still more interested in literature than social problems, and his emotional distaste for the capitalist spirit remained merely a personal feeling, isolated as yet from the main currents of his intellectual life. Young Germany, and in particular the persons of Gutzkow and Börne, still dominated the centre of his stage.

He was somewhat more critical of Gutzkow than he was of Shelley, mainly because he considered that not all of Gutzkow's dramas had reached the high standard of his best work. But a play like König Saul was worthy to be discussed along with Sophocles' Antigone or Shakespeare's Hamlet: it combined poetic beauty with such subtle dramatic power that the drama developed "calmly and organically, and a conscious, poetic force leads the action safely to its conclusion".⁸³ Gutzkow, Engels affirmed, was a creative talent of great individuality whose writings were among the finest products of

83. "Modernes Literaturlieben" ("Modern Literary Life"), Mitternachtszeitung für gebildete Leser, no. 51, 26/3/40, WERKE Ergänzungsband, 1 (2), p. 37; MECU, 2, n. 73.

modern German literature. And yet, he sensed, there was something unsatisfying about them. What was it? There was in Gutzkow, he mused, a "dualism": the dramatist possessed a powerful intellect and an equally powerful imagination, but he had not yet fused these two sides of his mind into a unity. Only rarely had Gutzkow achieved that integration of reason and emotion that Engels regarded as the hall-mark of the greatest literature, but his recent work showed that he had the potential to attain the high standard Schiller had set. His latest play, Werner, Engels, (who had yet to see it performed), expected would prove to be his best yet, "not only of great value in itself", but also "the first really modern tragedy".⁸⁴

Ludwig Börne was a different kind of sage, not a poet or dramatist but a literary critic and political essayist. Because of his radical political views — he was a republican democrat — he had sought refuge in Paris in 1830, and had written a series of articles, the Briefe aus Paris, 1831-33, expounding liberal ideas and commenting on French and German politics. He had also contributed a larger work, Menzel, der Franzosenfresser, designed to ridicule the illiberal franco-phobia of certain conservative German Romantics. Engels obtained, and read thoroughly, Börne's collected works, beginning with two volumes of literary criticism which he pronounced

84. "Modernes Literaturloben", Witternachzeitung für gebildete Leser, no. 54, 31/3/40, WERKE, Ergänzungsband, I (2), p. 45; MECH, 2, p. 80.

excellent, and concluding with Menzel which he thought "stylistically the best piece of work in German".⁸⁵ Probably what influenced him most, however, were the Briefe aus Paris, because here he encountered the ideas of the French democratic left: the views of men like Alexandre Ledru-Rollin, Godfrey Cavaignac, and possibly even Louis Blanc and Etienne Cabet. Börne was writing from Paris in the wake of the July Revolution when the republican left, disappointed by the conservatism of the new regime, was taking an increasingly radical position, calling for not only the introduction of universal suffrage but also certain social reforms. Intellectually, it was a period of resurgence for social Jacobinism, a resurgence which found institutional expression in the creation of the Société des Droits de l'Homme in 1833. Börne's articles conveyed the excitement and power of these radical ideas, and he seems to have made a similar impression on Engels as the reading of Tom Paine's Rights of Man had on many an English artisan in the early years of the century. He was overwhelmed. He had been a liberal before he read Börne, but the combination of the young Shelley and Börne (whom he read at much the same time) made him a Jacobin democrat. The Briefe, he excitedly informed Wilhelm Graeber, were "magnificent" and the "grace, the Herculean strength, the depth of feeling, the devastating wit of the Franzosenfresser (were) unsurpassable". Even

85. Engels to Wilhelm Graeber, 8/10/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 540; MECW, 2, p. 472.

Börne's writings on aesthetics showed him to be a "great fighter for freedom and justice", Engels added; they were precise, clear, and beautiful, a "sea of the most exuberant wit" from which "here and there, the sharp ideas of freedom rise out...like rocks".⁸⁶

Engels was convinced that liberal democracy was the "spirit of the times", that the ideas of the French Revolution, though they had received a temporary setback, were bound to succeed in the near future. The Revolution of 1830, he thought, had signalled the approach of a new democratic era, and he wrote a poem entitled "German July Days" commemorating the ninth anniversary of the fall of the Restoration Monarchy in France.⁸⁷ Like the young Marx, he had at this time a Condorcet-like faith in progress and the gradual, inexorable flowering of reason and liberty; he was prepared to use the phrase "historical necessity" to describe the evolution of European history from 1789 to the present.⁸⁸ On occasion, even, he suggested that the pace of change was quickening so rapidly that a democratic revolution was imminent. Who was he, he asked rhetorically, to swim against the tide? A revolution was necessary to sweep away the privileged orders:

86. Engels to Wilhelm Graeber, 24/5/39-15/6/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 519; MECW, 2, p. 448. Engels to Wilhelm Graeber, 13-20/11/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 551; MECW, w, p. 485.

87. Engels to Friedrich Graeber, 27/7/39, MEGA I, 2, pp. 523-524; MECW, 2, pp. 463-464.

88. Engels to Wilhelm Graeber, 30/7/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 535; MECW, 2, p. 466.

"we won't get anywhere with gentleness here, these pygmies - servility, aristocratic rule, censorship, etc., - have to be driven away with the sword". And when it came, as come it would, then it would be futile to oppose it: "on the contrary, when the spirit of the times comes along like a hurricane and pulls the train away on the railway line, then I jump quickly into a carriage and let myself be pulled along a little".⁸⁹

Perhaps the dominant motive in Engels' democratic republicanism in 1839-40 was his hatred of monarchy. Apart from Ernst August of Hanover, his bête noire was the Prussian royal family. Of Frederick William III of Prussia, he stated bluntly: "I hate him, and beside him I hate only perhaps two or three others; I hate him with a mortal hatred, and if I didn't so despise him, the shit, I would hate him still more. Napoleon was an angel beside him...." Actually, Engels was here personalising his general antipathy to the crowned heads of Europe. He regarded the period 1816-30 as "rich in royal crimes", commenting that almost every prince then ruling "deserved the death sentence". Spain, Austria, Portugal and Russia were cursed with the most reactionary and ruthless despots, he argued: Alexander I of Russia had been a "parricide", Ferdinand VII of Spain was "vicious", Dom Miguel of Portugal was a "scoundrel...(who) bathed in the blood of the best Portuguese", while Francis II of Austria had been "a machine that

89. Ibid., MEGA I, 2, p. 534; BECU, p. 465.

was only good for signing death sentences and dreaming of Carbonari". What Engels most hated these monarchs for was their jailing and execution of liberals and free-thinkers; the Europe of the Holy Alliance was founded on censorship, repression, and institutionalised violence, from which there would be no relief until "palace windows are smashed by the flying stones of the revolution".⁹⁰

Engels was, in 1839-40, much more hostile to Prussia and the Prussian monarchy than the young Marx. Frederick William III's foreign policy, he charged, was thoroughly reactionary and had made the king morally responsible for the deaths of the Spanish and Portuguese liberal patriots murdered by their reinstated royal rulers. He was also dishonest and hypocritical, because he had promised constitutional government for Prussia in 1815 but gone back on this promise as soon as he felt it safe to do so. Engels attacked the monarchy for a third reason, too: he was persuaded that its domestic policies were, beneath a veneer of progressive efficiency, designed to favour the aristocracy and keep the lower classes in passive subjection. He derived this analysis from a book by J. Venedey, Preussen und Preussenthum, which he thought excellent.⁹¹ Venedey, he told Friedrich Graeber, had subjected Prussian legislation, bureaucracy and tax-structure to

90. Engels to Friedrich Graeber, 9/12/39-5/2/40, MEGA I, 2, n. 558; MECW, 2, pp. 492-493.

91. J. Venedey, Preussen und Preussenthum, Mannheim, 1839.

close scrutiny, and had convincingly demonstrated "favours for the money aristocracy against the poor, endeavours to perpetuate absolutism,...suppression of political education, stupefying of the mass of the people", and the utilisation of religion to cement the established social order.⁹² Persuaded of the importance of Venedey's and Börne's critiques of Prussian politics, Engels decided, in his own phrase, to become "a large-scale importer of banned books into Prussia", by which grandiose phrase he meant he would send about half-a-dozen copies of Preussen, the Briefe aus Paris, and Menzel to his school-friends in Barmen.⁹³ This act, though minor in itself, indicates the passion with which the young man held his political views, and the importance with which he regarded the writings of Venedey, and above all Ludwig Börne.

How similar, then, were the views of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels at the beginning of the 1840s? There was a strong element of Romanticism in the personal values of each man, and they shared with the Romantics the ideal of the full self-development of the individual personality. They were both fairly well acquainted with German Romantic literature, rating Goethe and Schiller highly as artists and thinkers, and they both knew something of the ancient classics, although here Marx's academic training was the better. They were

⁹². Engels to Friedrich Graeber, 29/10/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 547; MECW, 2, p. 480.

⁹³. Engels to Wilhelm Graeber, 13-20/11/39, MEGA I, 2, p. 550; MECW, 2, p. 484.

familiar with the literary output and polemical debates of the 'second generation' German Romantics, and hence with their diagnosis of the ills of modern European society and suggested remedies. Both young men had started as Christians, but Engels' faith had been the deeper of the two, and consequently his struggle to free himself from his religious upbringing had been longer and more tortured. Despite their Romanticism, both Engels and Marx had some knowledge of and were indebted to the French and German Enlightenments; from these sources they derived their rationalism, their optimistic theories of history, and their political liberalism. Both men were critical of contemporary social life (which they saw as stifling to creative talents) and the Prussian state, but whereas Marx still had hopes of reforming both the Prussian government and society by reasoned argument, Engels' attacks were harsher and his remedy more drastic.

There was another respect, too, in which the intellectual development of the two men was similar. By the end of the 1830s both men had discovered the Young Hegelian movement and were avid readers of the Hallische Jahrbücher. If Enlightenment rationalism and liberalism on the one hand, and Romantic values and ideals on the other, were the roots of the personalities of both Marx and Engels, a third major influence on their thought was German Idealist philosophy. Marx had two years head-start on Engels in the study of Hegel and Hegelianism, and in the years 1839-41 lived at the heart of the Young Hegelian movement in Berlin, while Engels as an

apprentice in Bremen was far removed from the centres of intellectual rebellion. Both men, however, could reasonably be called Young Hegelians by the end of 1840, and for the next two years - until approximately the last months in 1842 for Engels and a little later in the case of Marx - neo-Hegelian philosophy was the dominant, although by no means the only, element in their views. Yet since the Young Hegelian movement was itself the heir to both German Romanticism and Enlightenment liberal-humanism, Young Hegelianism changed relatively little in Marx's and Engels' basic values. These had already been forged by the beginning of the 1840s.

CHAPTER 2

YOUNG HEGELIANISM AND LIBERAL POLITICS, 1840-42

Marx's Young Hegelian phase lasted from the winter of 1837-38 until the summer of 1843, Engels' from early 1840 to the end of 1842. In fact, their intellectual concerns ranged beyond the Young Hegelian movement even during these years, but for a brief period both men adopted the Young Hegelian interpretation of Hegel's philosophy as the best intellectual framework available for understanding contemporary ideas and events.

Hegelianism is an ambiguous term. It can refer to Hegel's own system, or it can denote the philosophical and political movements launched by some of his disciples after his death. Young Hegelianism (by which I mean the intellectual circles led by Eduard Gans, Arnold Ruge and Bruno Bauer) was the radical wing of the Hegelian movement, and emerged as a significant force with the creation of the Hallisch Jahrbuch für deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst in 1838. The Young Hegelians claimed their views were not only derived from Hegel's books and lectures, but were faithful to the spirit of his teaching. This was disputed by more conservative Hegelians at the time, and has been disputed by Hegel scholars since. There was little agreement over Hegel's 'message' in the late 1830s and early 1840s, and there is not much more now. Hegel's opinions evolved considerably during his academic career, and

were in the main expressed in an obscure and abstract jargon; moreover, the various components of his huge 'system', written down at different times, differed in tone and emphasis, so that one's interpretation of the whole will vary according to the weight one places on, say, his logic, his political theory or his philosophy of history. So Hegel's system must be distinguished from Young Hegelianism, and we must also recognise that the younger Hegel's views were not those of the elder, more conservative, academic celebrity. By and large, the ideas of the Young Hegelians were closer to those expressed in the Phänomenologie des Geistes and the lectures on world history edited by Eduard Gans than to those found in the Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts or the lectures on religion.

Luckily it is not necessary, in order to understand the genesis of marxism, to take sides in the dispute over how to interpret Hegel. What matters is how Marx and Engels understood him, and what they found of value in what they construed him to have said. We cannot, however, assume that they shared the same picture of Hegel's system, since they came to study Hegel and Young Hegelianism at slightly different times and in different circumstances. Marx, two years older than Engels, came to Hegelianism first. He lived for several years at the heart of the Young Hegelian movement in Berlin and played a minor role in its evolution, whereas Engels became a Young Hegelian only when the torrent was in full spate. Since the general question of the influence of Hegel on Marx

has been much debated by scholars and there already exists some monographic work on his relations with other Young Hegelians, I proposed to treat these two topics only briefly.¹ My

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1. Hegel's main works, in chronological order, were: Die Phänomenologie des Geistes, Bamberg & Würzburg, Goebhardt, 1807; Wissenschaft der Logik (2 vols), Nürnberg, Schrag, 1812-16; Encyklopaedie der philosophischen Wissenschaften in Grundrisse, Heidelberg, Osswald, 1817; Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, Berlin, Nicolaischen Buchhandlung, 1821; Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte (ed. Eduard Gans), Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1837. A first attempt at a collected edition of his writings was begun in the 1830s and was available to the Young Hegelians: Werke: Vollständige Ausgabe durch einen Verein von Freunden des Verewigten (18 vols), Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1832-45, 2nd ed., partly revised, 1840-47.

There is a voluminous secondary literature on Hegel in German, French and English. Among those titles I have found most useful are: Schlomo Avineri, Hegel's Theory of the Modern State, London, Cambridge U.P., 1972; Benedetto Croce, Ce qui est vivant et ce qui est mort de la philosophie de Hegel, Paris, Giard et Brière, 1910; Jean Hyppolite, Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire de Hegel, Paris, Rivière, 1948; Walter Kaufmann, Hegel: A Reinterpretation, N.Y., Doubleday, 1965, "The Hegel Myth and its Method", Philosophical Review, LX (1951), pp. 459-86; Alexandre Kojève, Introduction à la lecture de Hegel, Paris, 1947; György Lukacs, Der junge Hegel, Zürich, Europa Verlag, 1948; Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory, London, Oxford U.P., 1941; Emil Müller, "The Hegel Legend of 'Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis'", Journal of the History of Ideas, XIX (June, 1958), pp. 411-414; Geoffrey Mure, An Introduction to Hegel, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1940; Charles Taylor, Hegel, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1975.

The main organ of the Young Hegelian movement was the Hallischer Jahrbücher für deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst (1838-41), edited by Arnold Ruge. This journal was forced to cease publication by the Prussian government, but was continued (in Saxony) under the name Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst (1841-43). Arnold Ruge and Bruno Bauer (a university lecturer in theology and philosophy) were personal friends and were usually regarded as joint leaders of the movement, the former its political theorist and strategist, the latter its philosopher; Ludwig Feuerbach, on the other hand, was not a

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short discussion is intended to do two things: indicate the limited nature of Marx's intellectual debt to Hegel himself, and show the way in which Young Hegelianism served Marx as a bridge between his earlier Romantic liberalism and his new interest in French socialism which burgeoned in 1843. I shall also examine the neglected question of the influence of Hegel and Young Hegelianism on the developing thought and values of the young Engels, an influence which was in some respects stronger than in the case of Marx.

There were, as we have already seen, important philosophical points on which Marx differed from Hegel even when he was most under his wing. Nor did he remain for long a faithful disciple of Bruno Bauer and Arnold Ruge. Nonetheless, there were certain issues on which Marx was temporarily

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1. (cont'd) member of the Bauer/Ruge circle, but his writings were championed in the *Jahrbücher* and his thought (especially as expressed in *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Leipzig, Wigand, 1841, and "Vorläufige Thesen zur Reform der Philosophie" in A. Ruge et al (eds.), *Anekdoten zur neuesten deutschen Philosophie und Publizistik*, II, Zürich, 1843) had a strong influence on the group, so it seems legitimate to classify his ideas as part of the Young Hegelian intellectual movement.

As far as I know, there is no detailed modern scholarly study of the whole movement, but on individual Young Hegelians (including Feuerbach) I have found the following useful: Bert Andreas, *Marx et Engels et la gauche hégélienne*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1965; Auguste Cornu, *Moses Hess et la gauche hégélienne*, Paris, P.U.F., 1934; Sidney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx*, Ann Arbor, U. of Michigan P., 1962; Eugene Kamenka, *The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970; Karl Lowith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, London, Constable, 1966; David McLellan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx*, London, Macmillan, 1969.

(cont'd)

impressed by Hegel's work, and he was -- again, temporarily -- won over to Young Hegelianism heart and soul in the early 1840s. What, then, did Marx agree with in Hegel, and what was it that particularly appealed to him about the Young Hegelian blend of philosophy and politics? To answer these questions we must distinguish, as far as is possible, Marx's evaluation of Hegel from his general commitment to the Young Hegelian movement, and we must also recognise the changing focus of his thought in the early 1840s, from literature and philosophy to contemporary politics. During the late 1830s

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1. (cont'd) Most of the existing secondary literature on the young Marx emphasises either his alleged heavy debt to Hegel or the strong influence of Feuerbach, and the main disagreement among commentators has been which was the more significant. In particular, scholars have disputed whether the source of Marx's concept of alienation was Hegel or Feuerbach. As indicated in Chapter 1, I believe the roots of this idea lie in German Romanticism, and that Marx's basic attitudes were already formed before he read either Hegel or Feuerbach. Nor can I find any evidence in Marx's writings from the period 1837-42 that he latched on to Hegel's concept of self-estrangement while at Berlin or Bonn. Feuerbach's influence on him was undeniable, but it should not be exaggerated, and requires to be put in a context -- the aftermath of the Romantic movement -- lacking in most of the literature. Among those writers who stress the influence of Hegel on the young Marx, see: Löwith, op.cit.; Marcuse, op.cit.; Louis Dupré, Philosophical Foundations of Marxism, N.Y., Harcourt, 1966; and Robert Tucker, Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1961. Among those who have focussed on the influence of Feuerbach, see: Kamenka, op.cit., & The Ethical Foundations of Marxism, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962; Lloyd D. Easton & Kurt H. Guddat (eds.), Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, N.Y., Doubleday, 1967; and David McLellan, op.cit., & Marx before Marxism, London, MacMillan, 1970.

he was interested in Hegelianism primarily as a philosophical system, and although he declared his allegiance his Doctoral Dissertation revealed that his philosophical views were further from Hegel's than he realised. In the early 1840s he turned from academic philosophy to political journalism, and became increasingly critical of Hegelian political theory. He was thus never a strict disciple of Hegel, although he did read some of Hegel's works and discussed the Hegelian system with professors and students at Berlin University. Unfortunately, the sources on his activities during 1837-41 are meagre, consisting mainly of a few letters from Bruno Bauer, his notebooks on Epicurean philosophy, and the Doctoral Dissertation.²

After he stopped attending classes in Berlin, Marx's main intellectual project was the Dissertation, but it was not the only writing he undertook. In 1840 he produced a manuscript of a book on philosophy of religion, which he submitted unsuccessfully for publication. He was also interested in

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2. "Aus den Vorarbeiten zur Geschichte der epikureischen, stoischen und skeptischen Philosophie", MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 84-144; "Notes on Epicurean Philosophy", MECW, 1, pp. 403-509.

Die Doktordissertation, "Differenz der demokritischen und epikureischen Naturphilosophie nebst einem Anhange", MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 5-81; "Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature", MECW, 1, pp. 25-106.

There are extant eleven letters written by Bruno Bauer to Marx in Berlin and Trier between December 1839 and March 1842, but Marx's replies have not been recovered; MEGA I, 1 (2), Briefe #26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, 36, 39, 49, & 53, pp. 233-69. Not included in MECW.

logic and philosophy of language, and planned a book on dialectical reasoning, taking extensive notes on Aristotelian logic and discussing the problem in an exchange of letters with Bruno Bauer.³ It seems reasonable to deduce, therefore, that the aspects of Hegel's system which at first intrigued Marx the most were his philosophical theology and his theory of dialectical logic, that is, the more technical and abstract sides of Hegelianism. The Doctoral Dissertation, although completed at a time when Marx's thoughts were beginning to turn to politics, in the main confirms that Marx's mind had a predominantly theoretical and academic orientation before 1842.

As indicated earlier, the philosophical position adopted by Marx in the Dissertation was less Hegelian than Fichtean. Apart from Hegel, the modern philosopher about whom the student Marx was most enthusiastic was the young Schelling, the foremost disciple of Fichte at the turn of the century. In an appendix added after the main body of the thesis had been completed, Marx quoted with praise extracts from Schelling's early writings in which he had maintained that the notion of the Self was the first principle of all philosophical thought.⁴ Moreover, his enthusiasm for

3. MEGA I, 1 (2), pp. 233-269. Marx's study notebooks, made in Berlin and Bonn between 1840 and 1842, are extant also; MEGA I, 1 (2), pp. 107-118.

4. MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 79-81; MECW, 1, pp. 102-105.

Epicurus derived largely from the latter's stress on the absolute freedom and autonomy of the human consciousness.

However, it is unlikely that Marx considered this emphasis on the role of the subjective 'ego' in ethics and epistemology to be an implicit critique of Hegel. He interpreted the central Hegelian concept of 'Spirit' as a kind of collective human consciousness, and believed that the main thrust of Hegel's philosophy from the early Phänomenologie des Geistes to the posthumous Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte was an explanation of the gradually developing self-awareness of mankind. And although he made few references to Hegel in the main body of the thesis, he went out of his way to defend him in the notes against the charge that he had gone over to the forces of reaction. He offered the standard Young Hegelian defence of Hegel -- Engels used it too -- that one had to distinguish between the inner core of the philosopher's work and certain errors into which he had from time to time lapsed. Convinced that Hegel's political "compromises" with the Prussian autocracy had not been made out of expediency, he reasoned that either the sage had been oblivious to his own inconsistencies or there was something wrong with his basic tenets. In 1841 he inclined to the former explanation, but his remarks on the subject were far from crystal clear, which may indicate that nagging doubts about Hegel's premisses were already surfacing in his mind. Nevertheless, the main thrust of his discussion was a vindication

cation, not a criticism, of Hegel.⁵

Another feature of the Dissertation also indicated his respect for Hegel. Underlying the work was an implicit parallel between ancient Greek philosophy in the wake of Aristotle's system and German philosophy in the wake of Hegel's. Marx was interested in exploring the writings of the Stoics, Sceptics and Epicureans in part because he hoped they would cast light on the kind of philosophising which would be possible and fruitful in the aftermath of an intellectual giant. He suggested that each great philosophical system, from Aristotle to Hegel, represented a major step upwards, but at the same time a plateau in the tortuous climb upward of the human mind. Judging that all attempts so far by contemporary thinkers to go beyond Hegel had failed abysmally, he nonetheless asserted confidently that a new way forward would soon be found.⁶ Meanwhile, however, the practical task of implementing Hegelian principles remained uncompleted. The fundamental problem with Germany, he concluded, was that the real world of politics and business was dragging its feet, while the human spirit had already flown a stage higher and was peering into the mists of the future for a still more elevated road. Drawing a parallel between the post-Aristotelian ancient world and modern Germany in the wake of Hegel, he detected a severe tension between thought and action which was responsible for

5. MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 63-74; MECW, 1, pp. 84-85.

6. MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 132; MECW, 1, n. 492.

widespread political strife and intellectual anguish: both were "unhappy and iron epochs...characterised by titanic struggles".⁷

What should be the role of philosophy in such a situation? Marx answered that intellectuals should become "practical persons" and help reality catch up with the 'Idea'.⁸ To justify this he invoked his favourite Romantic hero from ancient mythology: Prometheus, he recalled, stole fire from heaven as a gesture of spiritual independence, but then built houses and created settlements on earth; in the same way Young Hegelians should begin building the new social community so badly needed. Since philosophy was, by its very nature, an abstract, theoretical discipline, this was, he admitted, a rather paradoxical conclusion, but he was certain that a "turn-about of philosophy, its transubstantiation into flesh and blood" was imminent, and that its new task was to bring modern life into conformity with Hegel's blue-print for the perfect State.⁹ Political journalism seemed the most promising method of achieving this, but before 1842 Marx was too preoccupied with his Dissertation to do more than contemplate greater involvement in liberal politics.

Although he had to steer clear of politics in his thesis, he did employ it as a vehicle for his campaign against

7. Ibid.

8. MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 131; MECW, 1, p. 491.

9. MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 133; MECW, 1, p. 492.

another facet of the status quo: the Christian religion. A convinced atheist by 1840, he regarded Christianity as a bundle of irrational superstitions, and religions generally as barriers to progress. He included in the Dissertation appendix several paragraphs designed to undermine religious belief, quoting D'Holbach's epigram in the Système de la nature that "nothing could be more dangerous than to persuade a man that a being superior to nature exists, a being before whom reason must be silent and to whom man must sacrifice all to receive happiness". He defended Epicurus' atheism against Plutarch's criticisms, contending that Hegel, without fully appreciating the implications of his arguments, had demolished the traditional proofs of the existence of God, such as the 'ontological argument'. And, following Feuerbach, he asserted that belief in God was a form of human self-alienation, the result of men mentally detaching human virtues from their original subject (mankind) and projecting them onto an imaginary creation of their own.¹⁰ The influence of Feuerbach on the thesis was, however, minimal and confined to the footnotes; Marx must have read Das Wesen des Christenthums in early 1841 when he was preparing the manuscript for submission, and on religious questions his mentor was the Young Hegelian 'theologian' Bruno Bauer.

Marx showed no interest in the Dissertation in Hegel's theory of dialectical reasoning or his notion of the self-

10. MEGA I, 1 (1), pp.79-81; MECW, 1, pp.102-105.

alienation of Spirit, two of the ideas he is usually supposed to have taken from Hegelianism. As we have seen, he put forward five main 'theses on Hegel': that Hegel, although sometimes inconsistent, was honest and liberal in spirit; that his critique of Christianity was implicitly atheist; that his central theme of the self-realisation of Spirit should be interpreted as the progressive flowering of human culture; that German philosophy after Hegel was in an analogous position to ancient thought after Aristotle; and that the task of post-Hegelian philosophy was the practical one of creating a free, moral, community-state.¹¹ None of these 'theses' was original. They were the common intellectual property of the Young Hegelian movement, and Marx picked them up while a student at Berlin University, one of the strongholds of the Young Hegelian movement. He was guided in his reading by prominent Young Hegelian professors, and his interpretation of Hegel was coloured accordingly. He did sometimes separate Hegel and Young Hegelianism in his mind, recognising that Hegel's political philosophy could be read in a conservative manner congenial to the Prussian government and that he had possibly intended to defend Christianity when he claimed the Bible expressed in symbols vital philosophical truths. Yet Marx assumed that by-and-large this conservative perspective on Hegel was misleading, and that, at bottom, Hegel was a

1. Doktordissertation, loc. cit., passim. See also my discussion of this work in Chapter 1.

liberal, a humanitarian, and an atheist. His Hegel was, in short, the Young Hegelian Hegel, and the thinkers who influenced him most in his student years were not Hegel himself or the orthodox Hegelian academics at Berlin, but Bruno Bauer, Eduard Gans, Arnold Ruge, and (from 1841) Ludwig Feuerbach.

There were several different facets of Young Hegelianism which attracted Marx. He shared the movement's critical attitude towards the Prussian government and the Church, and its goal of a more rational and freer society. He accepted the Young Hegelians' high evaluation of 'scientific philosophy' (meaning, of course, the Hegelian system) as a pedagogic tool, and he believed they had comprehended the direction in which history was moving. But above all, he enjoyed belonging to an avant-garde movement which he felt was leading the way to progress and reform. In the long run, this sense of being part of a superior subculture probably had the strongest impact on Marx because it reinforced what might be called, a little uncharitably, his 'arrogant outsider' complex: he was never happier than when playing the role of leader of small group of rebels possessed of truths unrecognised by society-at-large.

The Berlin Young Hegelians certainly had the sense of being the most daring, progressive, and forthright element in German intellectual life. They were, they believed, taking over the leadership of the enlightened intelligentsia from the Young Germany school which was becoming moribund.

Through the Berlin University "Doctors Club", the nerve centre of the movement, Marx became acquainted with the philosopher Bruno Bauer, Arnold Ruge, the political journalist who channelled philosophical radicalism into an attack on the Prussian constitution, and Eduard Gans, the professor whose courses on political and legal theory he attended in the late 1830s. He did not meet David Strauss or Ludwig Feuerbach in Berlin, but he read their notorious works, Das Leben Jesus and Das Wesen des Christenthums, by 1842. Certainly Marx found in the Berlin circle intellectual companionship he had previously lacked, while Bauer and Ruge undoubtedly reinforced his existing inclinations to atheism and left-liberal politics. Young Hegelianism thus channelled his Romantic rebellion into politics, convinced him of the excitement and worth of creative intellectual endeavour, and satisfied his hitherto unrequited yearning for personal friendship within a closely-knit community. No doubt he felt keenly the contrast between this warm, free Bohemian existence and the status-conscious, formal and materialistic society of the Trier bourgeoisie.¹²

For a time Marx consciously embraced the intellectual and political programme of Young Hegelianism. He took seriously Hegel's dictum that history was a march towards freedom, and that its goal was a fully rational society. He

12. See the literature on Marx and the Young Hegelians listed above, footnote 1.

accepted, too, that Hegel had discerned the fundamental principles of a state based on reason and morality rather than force and self-interest, and had demonstrated that this ideal was gradually being realised in contemporary Europe. Hegel, he thought, had provided modern liberalism with a more sophisticated political theory and philosophy of history than had the Enlightenment and the French Revolutionaries.¹³ Yet although Marx genuinely believed he was a disciple of Hegel, his view of history in the early 1840s was really Gans' and Ruge's. By their emphasis on freedom and progress as the dominant concepts in Hegel's philosophy, these Young Hegelians had re-established the original link between the young Hegel and Condorcet, bringing out the liberal, Enlightenment strain in Hegelianism which the older, more conservative Hegel of the Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts had largely abandoned. In this respect Young Hegelianism was a continuation of the Aufklärung and the liberal reformism of the Hardenberg-Stein era: it was an academic liberalism which looked to a modernising state as the vehicle of progress. And whereas Hegel's philosophy of history in the Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte was, notwithstanding his disclaimers,

13. MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 63-64 and 131-32; MECW, 1, pp. 84-85 and 491-493. Marx's friendship with Arnold Ruge developed during 1841-42 to complement his earlier friendship with Bruno Bauer. A few of Marx's letters to Ruge written during 1842 are extant, MEGA I, 1 (2), pp. 266-287; MECW, 1, pp. 381-395. They indicate his agreement with Ruge's transformation of Hegelian political theory into a form of democratic republicanism.

ultimately teleological and inevitabilistic, Ruge's and Gans' liberalism was not necessarily either. Implicitly, Ruge's position was voluntaristic and activist; he assumed the future was open, that the 'Idea' would only be implemented as the result of a concerted struggle (on the level of culture as well as in the political arena) by the progressive forces in German society. Of course the Young Hegelians had faith in their eventual victory and saw themselves as soldiers fighting on behalf of Hegel's 'Spirit', so there was a strain of 'historicism' in their outlook, but this trace of teleology was outweighed by their insistence that reform could not be left to arrive automatically as the result of natural social evolution or "the cunning of Reason". On balance the Young Hegelian philosophy of history was not 'historicist' -- it was not fatalistic, the element of teleology was slight, it was not based on any notion of developmental historical laws, and it was non-determinist. Marx, therefore, in espousing this view of history, had no need to modify his passionate belief in human freewill, and he could integrate it easily with his earlier political liberalism.

From their interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of history, the Young Hegelians (Marx included) drew the logical conclusion that the task of philosophy was to contrast the imperfections of contemporary society with the ideal that they hoped would be realised in the future. They believed the philosopher's job was to evaluate 'what is' in the light of 'what should be', that is, critically assess the degree to

which government policies and existing institutions measured up to the Hegelian vision of a perfectly free, moral and rational state. In practical terms this meant that the philosopher should lead public opinion and suggest constructive reforms in the hope of persuading the state to rid itself of non-rational anachronisms in its methods and structure. This, indeed, was no more than German liberalism had been doing, albeit rather timidly and ineffectively, for decades. But the Young Hegelians' dissatisfaction with the existing order was fiercer and more doctrinaire than that of their precursors, and their attacks on the inadequacies and illogicalities of the contemporary Prussian state were correspondingly more strident.¹⁴

One of the chief anachronisms they criticized in the Prussian constitution was the concept of a 'Christian monarchy' favouring both Catholicism and Protestantism. Advocates of Church/State separation, they believed that a modern system of government would be achieved throughout Germany only when religion had been discredited and purged from political life. Since the Hegelian system was academically highly respectable, they considered Christianity would be damaged if the educated public could be brought to realise that Hegel had

14. Marx's article, "Bemerkungen über die neueste preussische Zensurinstruktion" ("Comments on the Latest Prussian Censorship Instruction"), written in January 1842 and intended for the Deutsche Jahrbücher, provides a good example of this approach, MEGA I, I (1), pp. 151-173; MECW, 1, pp. 109-131.

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been a secret atheist. To this end, Bruno Bauer, with the help of Marx, composed a satirical pamphlet, Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel des Atheisten und Antichristen, in which he posed as a devout Pietist accusing Hegel of heresy. This was just one more salvo in a barrage of anti-religious literature published in the late 1830s and early 1840s, beginning with Das Leben Jesu in 1835 and culminating in Feuerbach's writings. Feuerbach's approach was more radical than Strauss' or Bauer's: religion, he contended, was man-made, a projection onto a mythical supernatural being of aspirations which the human race was unable, for political and economic reasons, to realise on earth. He suggested that men resorted to religion as to an opiate: it reconciled them to the imperfections of the world, and instead of struggling to create a better society they sublimated their best qualities in the worship of a Divine Being. Borrowing the term 'self-alienation' from Hegel to describe this process, he concluded that religion was best understood as the estrangement of man from his own true nature or 'species-being' (Gattungswesen). By 1842 Marx had adopted this Feuerbachian perspective, combined it with his earlier 'Promethean' paganism, and hoped to collaborate with Bruno Bauer on a periodical entitled The Archive of Atheism.¹⁵

Although Feuerbach was not a member of the Berlin

15. MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 79-81 and 131-132; MECW, 1, pp. 102-105 and 491-492. MEGA I, 1 (2), pp. 233-269.

Young Hegelian circle and was more critical of Hegel than Gans, Bauer or Ruge, his ideas were quickly assimilated into the movement by the rank-and-file (Marx and Engels were typical in this respect). This is not surprising when one remembers that Young Hegelianism had roots in German Romanticism, and this was the source too of Feuerbach's concept of Gattungswesen and the 'essentialist' picture of human nature which it implied. Like the second generation Romantics, Feuerbach conceived of 'true' human nature as well-rounded, fully-developed and organic, and he assumed that when man eventually overcame the lamentable fragmentation of his psyche he would have no further use for the illusions of religion. His notion of Gattungswesen thus fulfilled a similar role in his thought to the ideal of the ancient polis in Hölderlin's; he, too, was searching for a new world in which there would be no obstacles to the full participation of every individual in communal life. Feuerbach's concepts of 'self-alienation' and 'species-being' could easily be integrated into Marx's Young Hegelian outlook, indeed they cemented his atheism and liberalism by confirming what he already suspected, that a free and moral society could be built only when traditional religion -- which kept men in metaphysical and political chains -- had been destroyed. Liberal constitutional reform had therefore to go hand in hand with an intellectual 'mopping up' operation which would purge the human mind of superstitions inherited from the past.

Marx therefore found the fusion of Young Hegelian

liberalism and Feuerbachian 'humanism' highly attractive because, when combined, they showed not only that the Romantic dream of a modern equivalent to the ancient polis had a firm psychological foundation but also that there was a way to realise it in practice. In the Young Hegelian state, he believed, the antagonism between individual and society would be overcome, laws would merely translate into practical terms an ethical code upon which all citizens were agreed, and other institutions -- including the government -- would act as mediators reconciling in the most rational way conflicts between different social groups. But to his mind the goal of the Young Hegelian movement was not merely a new kind of political community but also a new kind of human personality: liberated from religion, balanced and versatile like the Greeks, yet more knowledgeable and sensitive to the restless striving of the human spirit. He considered that Hegelian 'science' would be at least as useful as Schiller's 'aesthetic education' in overcoming the fragmentation of the modern mind because Hegel's system, embracing natural science, history, aesthetics, philosophy, theology, and politics, was encyclopaedic. The systematic and comprehensive character of Hegel's work had been a revelation to Marx as a student, and he retained an admiration for the scope of this intellectual vision even when he had discarded almost all its specific doctrines. Hence, while he never accepted Hegel's views lock, stock and barrel, he failed in these years to adequately differentiate Hegel from Young Hegelianism or to worry much about the detailed points

on which he disagreed with the 'Master'.¹⁸ Only in 1842-43 was he to thoroughly reassess his attitude to Hegel. In 1841 he had cast himself in the role of a Young Hegelian 'critical' philosopher, a militant exponent of atheism, and a liberal reformer on the verge of a more active involvement in journalism. He also still cultivated the image of a wild Romantic hero; at least, that was how he appeared to Friedrich Engels who described him, rather unflatteringly, as:

Aswathy chap of Trier, a marked monstrosity.
He neither hops nor skips, but moves in leaps and bounds,
Raving aloud. As if to seize and then pull down
To Earth the spacious tent of Heaven up on high,
He opens wide his arms and reaches for the sky.
He shakes his wicked fist, raves with a frantic air,
As if ten thousand devils had him by the hair.¹⁹

The author of these lines described himself, in the same 'poem', as "Oswald the Montagnard, a radical is he, dyed in the wool, and hard". This "Montagnard" was soon to become a political journalist writing for the same newspaper as Marx, and was to have a significant influence on the evolution of Marx's thought from 1842 onwards. We must therefore turn to investigate Engels' opinions and values in 1840-42.

Friedrich Engels had remained in Bremen as a commerce student until the spring of 1841. There were no drastic changes in his views during 1840 and the early months of 1841,

18. MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 63-64; MECW, 1, pp. 84-85.

19. "Der Triumph des Glaubens" ("The Insolently Threatened Yet Miraculously Rescued Bible, or: The Triumph of Faith"), WERKE (Ergänzungsband) I (2), p. 301; MECW, 2, p. 336.

but he did broaden his intellectual horizon, becoming more concerned with social and economic problems, and being led by his admiration for David Strauss to read Hegel and the Young Hegelians. His enthusiasm for Young Germany waned somewhat, he clarified further his attitude to German Romanticism, and he deepened his knowledge of French liberal theory. But perhaps most important of all, he became aware, from his own personal observation, of the impact of technological change on North German society. Let us examine briefly these new developments in Engels' intellectual and psychological make-up.

Like the young Marx, Engels was still something of a Romantic in 1841. He continued to read Byron, Goethe and other Romantic poets enthusiastically, went ahead with his project of translating Shelley, eulogised Beethoven's stormy symphonies, and adopted the Romantics' idealisation of ancient Greece. He developed a taste for social-romantic novels, praising the books of George Sand and Mary Godwin, and, a year or so later, discovering Dickens with much pleasure. By and large he retained his commitment to Romantic values: "Activity, life, youthful spirit, that is the real thing!" was a revealing aside he made in a letter to Wilhelm Graeber in November 1840.²⁰ He had an acute sense of the power of emotion on human actions, as is shown by a description he penned for the Telegraph für Deutschland of the intoxicating effect of the celebration of High Mass in a church on the banks of the Rhine.

20. Engels to Wilhelm Graeber, 20/11/40. MEGA I, 2, p. 560; MECW, 2, p. 514.

Despite his rationalistic rejection of a revealed religion, Engels still felt the emotional need for a faith. God was not yet dead for him: he had been guided by Schleiermacher and Strauss to believe in a Being "whose house is not made by human hands, who is the breath of the world and who wants to be worshipped in spirit and in truth".²¹

His new pantheism harmonised easily with his passionate love of natural scenery. One of the things he admired in Shelley was his gift for depicting nature, and he sympathised with Shelley's and Goethe's intuition that the world was permeated by a 'spirit of nature'. He enjoyed travelling, and painted for the Telegraph word-pictures of the different landscapes of Greece, Holland and Britain. These foreign journeys Engels apparently made only in his imagination, but he made one pilgrimage down the Rhine to Xanten, "Siegfried's Native Town" (as he called it in the Telegraph),²² and later, when he had completed his apprenticeship in Bremen, travelled over the Swiss Alps to Italy. He wrote for the Romantic periodical Athenäum a lyrical evocation of the snow-capped mountains, glaciers, plunging torrents and Alpine valleys. He ended his description of one mountain pass, the Via Mala, with a remark which expressed his recognition of the control which modern technology gave man over the forces of nature

21. "Siegfrieds Heimat" ("Siegfried's Native Town"), MEGA I, 2, p. 92; MECW, 2, pp. 133-134.

22. Ibid.

but at the same time warned against regarding these forces too lightly. "Here, too", he wrote, "spirit has conquered nature and like a linking ribbon the road goes on from rock to rock, safe, comfortable, almost indestructible, and negotiable at all seasons of the year. Yet an awful feeling of fear creeps over one at the sight of the menacing rocks: they seem to be brooding on vengeance and liberation."²³

Vengeance and liberation. These words sum up Engels' political views in 1840-41. We have seen that he quickly became a republican democrat at Bremen during the first year or so of his commercial apprenticeship; thereafter, his convictions strengthened and were held even more passionately. Musing on the powerful appeal of the Siegfried legend to German youth, he suggested that Siegfried symbolised the unfettered, **freedom-loving** spirit fighting against the restraints imposed by a reactionary society. Promising that his generation would carry on this liberation struggle, he lashed out at the authoritarianism of the Prussian monarchy: "Police for thinking, police for speaking, police for walking; riding and driving, passports, residence permits, and customs documents -- the devil strike these giants and dragons dead!"²⁴ This hostility to the bureaucratic state was to become a recurrent motif in Engels' writings, and it was a deeply felt

23. "Lombardische Streifzüge, I: Über die Alpen" ("Wanderings in Lombardy, I: Over the Alps"), *WERKE* (Ergänzungsband) I (2), p. 157; MECW, 2, p. 177.

24. "Siegfrieds Heimat", *MEGA* I, 2, p. 94; MECW, 2, p. 135.

aversion which never left him. The apparent eagerness of moderate liberals to reach a compromise with the authoritarian Prussian state disgusted him; he looked for a revolution on the model of 1789-93, no less. He studied French liberal political theory and the history of the French Revolution, and sympathised with the Montagnards: his heroes were Danton, Marat, and Robespierre. He did not, however, have much sympathy for the sans-culottes whom he regarded as wild, unruly and hostile to rational thought, but he undoubtedly identified heart and soul with Revolutionary France. France he likened to the Venusberg of the Tannhäuser legend, and French revolutionary ideas to the "seductive, passionate maidens that beckon from its pinnacles". German youths, he proclaimed, no longer heeded the Francophobe warnings of old German Romantics like Ernst Arndt; they stormed across the Rhine to find in Paris the "freedom to act, fuller, more exuberant vitality, ardent, impetuous throbbing in the veins of world history", following in the footsteps of Börne who had first shown them why they should feel sympathy for France.²⁵

Engels regarded England as a land of relative freedom, and he admired the republicanism of Swiss city-states like Zürich, but he unquestionably saw in France the chief external influence on German liberalism.²⁶ Whereas in South

25. "Ernst Moritz Arndt", MEGA I, 2, p. 96; MECW, 2, p. 137.

26. Ibid. Cf. "Nord-und süddeutscher Liberalismus" ("North- and South- German Liberalism"), WERKE (Ergänzungsband) I (2), pp. 246-248; MECW, 2, pp. 265-267.

Germany there was an indigenous, though comparatively moderate, liberal tradition which derived from the Enlightenment, he argued that North German liberalism was a more democratic variety. Born of the spontaneous popular uprisings against Napoleon in 1815, it was also indissoluble from German nationalism. Engels was himself a German nationalist -- he ardently desired a unified Germany, and was fiercely hostile to French claims to the left bank of the Rhine -- but he repudiated the chauvinism of Friedrich Jahn and other 'Germanizers' which he believed was now waning in influence since the July Revolution reinvigorated the appeal of French liberalism. Even before 1830, he maintained, Börne and Hegel had been working to develop a synthesis of German nationalism and French liberal thought.²⁷ Börne had been the fierier and harder hitting propagandist for democracy, but his broadsides had sometimes been too crude, whereas Hegel, although the impact of his writing was less immediate, had been a more systematic, and in the long run more influential, thinker.²⁸ Engels now admired the two men equally, and was convinced a synthesis of their work was needed.

He had first begun reading Hegel in January 1840, discovering him through David Strauss. Later in the same year he had found out about Gans and Ruge and become an en-

27. "Ernst Moritz Arndt", MEGA I, 2, p. 101; MECW, 2, p. 142.

28. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, pp. 101-102; MECW, 2, pp. 142-144.

thusiastic reader of the Hallische Jahrbücher für deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst, the house organ of the Young Hegelian school during 1838-41. But Hegel initially attracted him more than the disciples, most of whom he judged had failed to live up to the standards set by their master. The first work by Hegel which he read was the Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte; he reported to Friedrich Graeber that its "tremendous thoughts" had gripped him "terribly" and that he had embraced its central doctrine that world history was the realisation of the concept of freedom.²⁹ Still struggling to emancipate himself fully from his Pietist upbringing, he was equally interested in Hegel's philosophical-theology, and he accepted with enthusiasm what he took to be Hegel's anthropocentric interpretation of Christianity, attributing to him the principle that "humanity and divinity are in essence identical".³⁰ In this respect, however, Hegel only confirmed what the youth had already found in David Strauss, whereas the Hegelian philosophy of history caused him to reassess his linear view of progress. In an article entitled "Retrograde Signs of the Times" he repudiated Concorcet and advanced a new theory of history obviously drawn from Hegel.³¹ The "world-spirit" moved in an upward spiral,

29. Engels to Friedrich Graeber, 9/12/39-5/2/40. MEGA I, 2, pp. 553-559; MECW, 2, pp. 487-493.

30. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, p. 556; MECW, 2, p. 490.

31. "Retrograde Zeichen der Zeit" ("Retrograde Signs of the Times"), MEGA I, 2, pp. 62-63; MECW, 2, p. 48.

he claimed, which explained why every so often history seemed to be repeating itself and why there were periods of apparent regression when centuries of progress seemed to have been lost.³² He suggested that Germany, in 1840, had reached such a time of stagnation when "the feudalism of the Middle Ages and the absolutism of Louis XIV, the hierarchy of Rome and the pietism of the last century" were all making a last despairing stand against "free thought". He asserted that this conservative revival would soon disintegrate in confusion, crushed beneath "the adamantine foot of the forward moving time",³³ and that the source of the next surge of progress could already be detected: the Young Hegelian movement, which would raise German liberalism to a higher stage by fusing the virtues of Hegel and Börne.³⁴

He repeated this theme several times in his articles of 1840-42. On the face of it, the idea was paradoxical since Börne was a democrat while Hegel was known, on the basis of his Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, as an apologist for the same Prussian state that Börne so violently attacked. As a new convert to Young Hegelianism, Engels had to explain his way out of this difficulty. It was based, he claimed, on a misunderstanding of Hegel who had been indeed "servile in front" but "revolutionary behind" (i.e., his

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., MEGA 1, 2, n. 55; MEGA, 2, pp. 1-31.

theory of the state was superficially conservative but liberal in essence).³⁵ Gans and Ruge, taking it to its logical conclusion, had revealed its progressive content, and in doing so they had openly expressed what Hegel himself had really thought. He made little attempt to prove in detail that Hegel had been secretly an advanced liberal; it was self-evident, he considered, that the views expressed in the Hallische Jahrbücher were the natural, logical, extension of Hegel's own. Gans had demonstrated this in part by publishing Hegel's lectures on history and carrying Hegelian philosophy of history forward to the present, while Ruge and Karl Friedrich Koppen had "openly expressed the liberalism of Hegelianism", thereby making the Young Hegelian movement the vanguard of German progressive politics. Liberal Hegelianism was, he concluded, an impregnable intellectual fortress in which radicals could take their stand against the current conservative resurgence.³⁶

Engels claimed that the Hallische Jahrbücher was the most widely read journal in North Germany, and boasted, prematurely, that it was so popular that the Prussian government would be afraid to ban it.³⁷ His somewhat exaggerated notion

35. "Ernst Moritz Arndt", MEGA I, 2, pp. 101-102; MECW, ²ψ, p. 143.

36. Ibid.

37. Engels to Friedrich Graeber, 22/2/41. MEGA I,2, p. 562; MECW, 2, p. 526.

of the Young Hegelian movement's impact on German politics helps explain the optimism of his analysis of contemporary German liberalism. In Southern Germany, he asserted, liberalism was too eclectic, drawing on French, English and Spanish models as well as indigenous traditions, and ending up with "something very general, vague and blurred, which was neither German nor French, neither national nor definitely cosmopolitan, but simply abstract and incomplete". Disunited over issues like national unity and universal suffrage, the South German movement had achieved less than it had promised in 1830; moreover its temporary success had been dependent on the momentary excitement of the July Revolution in France and it had subsequently fallen dormant. In consequence, the North German liberals had taken over the struggle.³⁸ Liberalism in the north, he admitted, had nearly died after 1815, but one man, who was "worth more than all the South Germans together", had kept the flame alight and established himself as the prophet of the German democratic movement: Ludwig Börne. And when Börne's journalistic work had been consolidated by Hegel's theoretical studies, North German liberalism had assumed a vanguard role in the march of world history. Young Hegelian liberalism -- the fusion, of course, of Börne and Hegel -- was now strong enough to launch a vigorous on-

38. "Nord- und süddeutscher Liberalismus", *WERKE* (Ergänzungsband) I (2), pp. 246-248; *MECW*, 2, p. 265-267.

slaught against "each and every form of reaction".³⁹ Its victory was, sooner or later, certain, because its political strategy was founded on an understanding of the pattern of world history. In this way, by emphasising the 'progressive' elements in Hegel's philosophy of history while largely ignoring his philosophy of right, Engels effected, to his own satisfaction, the synthesis of liberalism and Hegelianism he so desired in 1840-41. This fusion of Borne and Hegel remained the foundation of his outlook until the last months of 1842 when the shock of witnessing the Industrial Revolution in its most extreme form in Manchester drove him, emotionally and intellectually, along a new path.

Yet if, by the end of 1841, Young Hegelian liberalism was rapidly becoming the most dominant force in Engels' mind, he had not sloughed off his early Romanticism nor his preoccupation with religion. Furthermore, there was another strain in his consciousness which was slowly maturing and which helps explain the impact which Manchester was to have on him. During 1840-41 he continued to feel his youthful distaste for commerce, but he became much more aware of the social power of business and industry, of the ways in which trade, money, and property dominated people's lives. He also recognised for the first time the speed of current technological change, and the impact new mechanical inventions had on everyday existence. His attitude to this new technology was ambivalent:

39. Ibid.

while he praised scientific advances, and welcomed railways and steamships, he sensed that ordinary people were by no means always the beneficiaries of industrialisation because, under the existing social structure, they lacked the wealth, property and education to make use of the new technology.

He was convinced by his apprenticeship at Bremen that commerce was fraudulent. Previously, at Barmen-Elberfeld, he had regarded business as boring and businessmen hypocritical, but his personal experience of commercial methods in the linen-export trade and, even more, his observations of the practices of less respectable merchants than his master, led him to conclude it was immoral too. Businessmen had, he observed, evolved a mystifying technical jargon of their own in order to disguise the game of deceit which they habitually played. In one of his journalistic "Reports from Bremen", in which he reflected on the quality of life in the trading town, he gave an amusing example of this language: "superfine medium good real Domingo coffee" really meant, he explained, "a pale grey-green coffee from the island of Haiti, each pound of which has fifteen half-ounces of good beans, ten half-ounces of black beans and seven half-ounces of dust, small stones and other rubbish".⁴⁰ In one mood, the young Engels regarded such trickery with ironic detachment, but on

40. "Korrespondenz-Nachrichten aus Bremen: Eine Fahrt nach Bremerhaven" ("Reports from Bremen: An Outing to Bremerhaven"), WERKE (Ergänzungsband) I (2), p. 87; MECW, 2, p. 118.

other occasions a frustrated anger at the pettiness and meaninglessness of the business world boiled up inside him. At such times he revealed an almost sadistic delight in the misfortune of the normally prosperous and complacent Bremen merchants. In October 1840, for example, when a financial crisis hit the German economy causing currency depreciation, Engels reported gleefully to his sister Marie: "The louis d'or are falling so that anyone here in Bremen who had a million talers a year ago now only has 900,000, that is, 100,000 talers less. Isn't that tremendous?"⁴¹ To his sister also he confided how he hated his daily routine in the shipping office and how impatient he was to finish with it all. At last, in March 1841, when his apprenticeship was coming towards its end, he could write to Marie: "Thank God that I too am leaving this dreary hole where there is nothing to do but fence, eat, drink, sleep and drudge, voilà tout".⁴²

This distaste for business was one side of the coin, and is understandable in the light of Engels' Romantic values and his love of literature and philosophy. But Engels, unlike some Romantics, was not against science, technology and industry. He recognised that they were destroying traditional values and life-styles, but he had no great love for the

41. Engels to Marie Engels, 29/10/40. MEGA I, 2, p. 602; MECW, 2, p. 513.

42. Engels to Marie Engels, 8-11/3/41. MEGA I, 2, p. 611; MECW, 2, p. 529.

status quo, and believed it would certainly be possible to build a better, more rational, world. Scientific inventions, he thought, would have an important role to play in carving more freedom for man from his daily round of necessary tasks. He hailed the invention of the printing press as one such epoch-making discovery, and expected the steamship, because of the improvement which it would bring in world communications, would prove another. Improved technology meant liberation from material limitations, he argued, so it went hand in hand with the growth of political liberty and the freeing of thought from the chains of censorship, superstition and prejudice. Railways and steamships would soon bring the energetic, democratic, progressive New World into constant contact with the Old, and this would speed up social and political change in Europe. Such technological innovations demonstrated, he considered, the striving inherent in human nature to overcome any and all obstacles encountered by the race, and also the relative ease with which these obstacles could be thrown aside given the will to do so.⁴³

For Engels, then, science and industry were potentially good, provided the correct use was made of them. But he recognised that economic change brought misery to some of those whose lives were dislocated in the process, such as the

43. "Korrespondenz-Nachrichten aus Bremen: Schiffbau- und Projekt-Theater-Manöver" ("Reports from Bremen: Shipbuilding Project-Theatre-Manoeuvres"), *WZL* (Bremen: WZL-Band) 1 (2), p. 102; *WZL*, 1, p. 129.

German peasants he observed sailing from Bremerhaven who had been driven to abandon their own communities and venture penniless into the unknown called America. These wretched families had decided to emigrate, he reasoned, because they were landless, and saw no escape in Europe from the fate of becoming poverty-stricken wage-labourers like the factory workers of Elberfeld. Yet the class stratification of the society they were leaving followed them even onto their emigrant ship where they were packed like sardines in the airless hold because they lacked the money to pay for cabins. He described these desperate, courageous men and women with sympathy, and his loathing for the shipping companies that exploited them could be felt in the picture he drew of conditions below deck. But he saw in emigration not a solution but merely a symptom of a social crisis which was disrupting German life. Germany, he argued, was in the throes of a conflict between a feudal, agrarian social system and a modern, liberal system based on commerce, mobility of labour, and mobility of wealth. North German political life -- currently a struggle between Prussian aristocratic conservatism and Rhenish liberalism -- reflected this fundamental social war. The outcome of the political conflict was dependent on the outcome of the social struggle between the aristocracy and the burghers, he maintained: "Everything turns on the nobility. When the nobility goes, so does the estates system".⁴⁴

44. "Ernst Moritz Arndt", MEGA I, 2, p. 104; MECW, 2, p. 146.

The key to this struggle, he added, was the question of landed property. To the middle-class liberals the status quo was intolerable because the continued existence of huge landed estates cut off forever most peasant farmers from the possibility of owning their own land. Engels' solution was a free market in land; he was, at this time, an economic liberal, an exponent of laissez-faire, as well as a political liberal, an advocate of democratic republicanism.⁴⁵ His knowledge of economic theory, however, was much slighter than his knowledge of political theory, and in 1841 he was only just beginning to take an interest in political economy. Perhaps more significant than his commitment to economic liberalism was his focus on the question of property. He felt too ignorant of the literature on the subject to do the issue of private property justice in 1841, but he already regarded it as important. Remarking that it was high time the Young Hegelian movement worked out its position, he suggested that a careful study of the experience of the French Revolution might provide a useful guide.⁴⁶

Before 1842, therefore, Engels' thought had been influenced by France in two main ways: as an adolescent he had embraced the rationalist spirit of the French Enlightenment, and at Bremen he had, through the intermediary Börne, sympathised with the latter-day Jacobinism of the Société des

45. Ibid. MEGA I, 2, pp. 105-106; MECW, 2, p. 147.

46. Ibid. MEGA I, 2, p. 106; MECW, 2, p. 147.

Droits de l'Homme. In his political views he had already exchanged his early Montesquieuan moderate constitutionalism for Condorcet's democratic republicanism, while under the influence of Hegel's philosophy of history he had modified an earlier faith in linear progress into his more complex, but still optimistic 'spiral' theory. Now, in 1842, he took a greater interest than ever before in the events and doctrines of the 1790s in France. He was stimulated to do so in part by conservative critiques of Young Hegelianism, such as that made by Heinrich Leo, who referred to Ruge and his friends disparagingly as "children of the French Revolution". More important, he believed that Germany was on the eve of its 1789 and expected the Young Hegelian movement to play a leading role in the forthcoming reconstruction of the fragmented and still semi-feudal country. Not only did he personally identify with the Montagnards in the revolutionary Convention, he playfully -- but with an undertone of seriousness -- cast Ruge in the role of Danton, Feuerbach as Marat, and Bruno Bauer as Robespierre in a satirical poem he wrote in June-July 1842.⁴⁷

Thus by the summer of 1842 Engels was an open advocate of revolutionary Jacobinism and was consciously looking to the French Revolution as a model for political action in Germany in the near future. This overtly revolutionary position

47. "Der Triumph des Glaubens", *WERKE* (Ergänzungsband) I (2), pp. 283-316; MECW, 2, pp. 313-351.

led him to criticise scathingly liberal politicians and newspapers more moderate than himself. But for all his rhetoric he remained preoccupied in the main with the causes traditionally espoused by middle-of-the-road liberals: press freedom, trial by jury, non-interference by the government in elections, and the separation of powers between different branches of government.

Indeed, under the influence of Ruge and Koppen, he revised his attitude to the Prussian state which had previously been one of blanket hostility. Now he saw it as in some respects a vehicle for German liberalism and a promising subject for liberal reform, although he still expected that an insurrection would be necessary before reforms could be made. Economically and financially, he now believed, Prussia was progressive, indeed the only European country to fully implement the doctrines of Adam Smith. The problem with Prussia was merely that its political system was lagging behind its economic development, so there was a crying need, unperceived by the government, to bring the two into harmony. The old feudal Prussia, he claimed, had been swept away by the flood of the Napoleonic invasion, and the citizens of Prussia were no longer fettered by "those medieval balls and chains which hamper the progress of so many states". Thus liberated, Prussia had a unique opportunity: alone, perhaps, among European countries it was in a position to "follow solely the inspiration of reason" and become a model state. In short, it was in Engels' opinion high time that Prussia

recognised its vocation of carrying the Hegelian 'world-spirit' one stage higher in its ascending circle towards 'freedom'. In 1789 and again in 1830, France had embodied the progress of the human spirit; now, he thought, it was Germany's turn to lead mankind.⁴⁸

Engels' liberalism was thus fully Young Hegelian in spirit by the summer of 1842. One reason for the increasing strength of this Young Hegelian element in his thought during 1841-42 was his establishment of personal contacts with the Young Hegelian chiefs, Ruge in particular. He was able to do so because in the fall of 1841 he moved to Berlin to do his military service (a 'voluntary' one-year term to avoid conscription later), and so had the opportunity of attending a few lectures at Berlin University and meeting some of the contributors to the Hallische Jahrbücher. It was during this year in Berlin that he first met Marx, but the two young men appear to have remained no more than distant acquaintances at this time.

Eduard Gans, the most socially-minded of the Young Hegelians, had died in 1839, so Engels never had a chance to meet him, but it is possible that some of Gans' students informed Engels about their master's attempt to fuse Hegelianism with Saint-Simonianism. At any rate, whether through the indirect influence of Gans, or more probably as a result of his

48. "Tagebuch eines Hospitanten" ("Diary of a Guest Student"), WERKE (Ergänzungsband) I (2), pp. 249-254; MECW, 2, pp. 268-273.

own growing interest in economic matters (itself evidenced by his attendance at a Berlin University lecture on the Prussian financial system), Engels added a new dimension to his political thought in the summer of 1842. For the first time since the moralistic "Letters from the Wuppertal", he showed that he was aware of and concerned about the social question, and in particular the problem of poverty. In a brief article defending the jury system he bluntly gave his approval to juries who acquitted starving workers driven by hunger to steal bread.⁴⁹ This was the first occasion on which he employed the word "proletarian", meaning by the term any lower class worker (artisan or wage-labourer). By his use of the word in a non-pejorative sense, and by his tone of indignant outrage at social injustice, Engels revealed in this piece a new social conscience. His politics were indeed still liberal, but he now had in addition a renewed interest in the fate of the lower classes.

In 1841-42, however, Engels' awareness of economic and social problems was still only a minor current in his thought. He was still wrestling with the question of Christianity, and, under the influence of Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach he worked out a new intellectual stance in this area. In 1840, as we have seen, he had temporarily adopted from Hegel a quasi-pantheist view of God as a 'world-spirit'

49. "Das Aufhören der Criminalistischen Zeitung" ("The end of the Criminalistischen Zeitung"), WERKE (Ergänzungsband) I (2), pp. 269-270; MECU, 2, pp. 302-303.

realising Himself progressively through the increasing perfection of the human race, and from Strauss the proposition that the Christian religion expressed through myth and symbol the fundamental truth inherent in all world religions: man's perpetual struggle to overcome the animal side of his nature and attain a god-like moral and intellectual perfection. Bauer and Feuerbach led him to revise these ideas. Abandoning the equation between the Hegelian 'world-spirit' and God, he concluded that the 'world-spirit' was no more and no less than the collective consciousness of mankind: that is, the sum total of human knowledge and culture. This meant that history ceased to be a theodicy, and modern civilisation was the work of men and men alone. Such a purely secular view of world history left little room for religion within it. He still thought of human life as a continual struggle to perfect human nature and human society, but Christianity no longer seemed to have any positive role to play because it was no longer an acceptable moral guide. 'Reason', which he now interpreted in a Hegelian sense, had taken over this task; moreover, convinced that faith and reason were antipathetic, he decided that his old ideal of a rational religion was a chimera. So Christianity lost for Engels its one remaining positive attribute and became in his eyes a wholly negative force, the enemy of science, free thought, and intellectual progress. Not surprisingly, he became an atheist. In a satirical poem, "The Insolently Threatened Bible", he applauded Bruno Bauer's Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts

Über Hegel den Atheisten und Antichristen, and asserted that Hegel had indeed been an atheist.⁵⁰

Thus by the summer of 1842 Engels' recently adopted Hegelianism was already atheist, democratic, and revolutionary in content, a far cry from the conservative, Christian and elitist outlook of the elderly Hegel. Yet the young soldier was firmly convinced that he was a good disciple, and wrote several pamphlets and articles defending Hegel against his critics. The most important of these were two polemics against the aged Schelling, Schelling and Revelation and Schelling, Philosopher in Christ, in which he denounced his lectures at Berlin University as a malicious attempt to distort and belittle Hegel's philosophical achievement.⁵¹

These pamphlets were significant for several reasons. They showed, in the first place, Engels' commitment to the Hegelian concept of 'Reason' and belief that human history was inherently purposive. He vehemently attacked Schelling for his cautious empiricism, claiming that on Schelling's "positive" view of the world events were merely contingent and that he had denied the fundamental insight which united German Idealist philosophers from Fichte to the present: the recognition that 'reality' derived from both 'external' facts

50. "Der Triumph des Glaubens", loc. cit.

51. Schelling und die Offenbarung, Leipzig, Binner, 1842. Schelling der Philosoph in Christo, Berlin, Guffenhardt, 1842. Both reprinted in JERKE (Ergänzungsband) I (2), pp. 173-245; MECU, 2, pp. 189-264.

and a rational mind imbuing these with meaning. Since this 'reality' was inherently rational, he continued, the course of history must likewise exhibit a logic of its own which the philosopher could sum up in his categories. That, he affirmed, was precisely what Hegel had done: he had grasped the universe as "reasonable and whole". In Engels' opinion, Schelling had no right to call himself a philosopher at all since he had artificially split the realm of human knowledge and discourse into two isolated halves: one the province of empirical investigation (he refused to use the word 'science' to describe what he denigrated as mindless empiricism and misguided positivism), the other the province of belief or faith, ultimately beyond rational understanding. He categorically rejected this Thomist 'fork'. By splitting reason in this way, he argued, Schelling had relapsed into an unsatisfactory epistemological dualism and had thrown away the "great practical results of modern philosophy".⁵²

Although he had no training in academic philosophy, Engels had hit the nail on the head. He had perceived accurately the fundamental difference between the two main philosophical schools of early nineteenth century Europe, British empiricism and German Idealism, and had explicitly opted for the latter, nailing his colours to the mast of Hegel's philosophical 'science' which, among other things,

52. Schelling und die Offenbarung, WERKE (Ergänzungsband) I (2), p. 181; MECW, 2, p. 201.

denied the fact/value distinction so favoured by post-Humean 'positivists'. He was to retain this disdain for 'mere empiricism' all his life, even when, in the 1870s, he became an amateur scientist in the 'positivist' intellectual atmosphere of Victorian England. Now, in 1842, he was infatuated with Hegel's 'dialectical logic', and defended it in pages of detailed obscurity against Schelling's modifications. He undoubtedly picked up at this time some notion of 'dialectics', a concept which was to play a central role in his later socialist theory, especially towards the end of his life. Clearly, too, Engels' thought in 1842 was 'historicist', in that he both possessed a 'holistic' view of human knowledge, and explicitly espoused a teleological perspective on the entire course of history.

His polemic against Schelling also revealed his overview of the historical development of modern philosophy. The foundation, he suggested, had been laid by Descartes' proposition cogito, ergo sum, which demonstrated once for all that "existence belongs indeed to thought, [and] that being is immanent in the mind". Descartes' insight, however, had largely lain dormant until the advent of Kant and Fichte. Kant's achievement had been to free "rational thinking from space and time", that is, explain how the fundamental categories of 'scientific' knowledge were creative tools devised by the rational mind in order to impose order on the chaos of sensory experience, and not chains imposed by external phenomena on the imagination. Fichte, by his stress on the

'ego', had brought out fully for the first time the irreducibly 'subjective' element in man's perception of and dealings with nature and society, and he had shown that 'reason' was not an impersonal, abstract calculus but an essentially creative and personal act of the imagination. Hegel, of course, was the philosophical genius who had synthesised these insights into a comprehensive system, incorporating a historical dimension which the Idealist tradition had previously neglected. But he had expounded his system in an abstract and rigid manner, and only a few disciples had comprehended his vision during his lifetime. It was only after Hegel's death, stated Engels, that "his philosophy really began to live", partly because his collected works (including his lectures on world history) were then published, and in part because Gans, Ruge, Strauss, Bauer, Feuerbach, and others developed properly various aspects of his system, applying his approach to contemporary problems in theology, aesthetics, law, and politics.⁵³

When he wrote Schelling and Revelation Engels was particularly enthusiastic about the contribution of Ludwig Feuerbach to post-Hegelian philosophy. Convinced by Bauer and Strauss of the redundancy of theology and the necessity of atheism, he nonetheless found in Feuerbach's Das Wesen des Christentums a way of understanding the meaning of the Christian religion in human terms. He obviously found the book

53. Ibid, WERKE (Ergänzungsband) I (2), pp. 175-177; MECW, 2, pp. 195-197.

liberating. With Feuerbach, he proclaimed, a new era in human thought had opened because the psychological and social functions of religion had been explained and the creation of a new kind of society made possible.⁵⁴ The Romantic ideal of creative individuals fulfilling their personalities in a free, co-operative community like that of ancient Greece was no longer a Utopian fantasy. "A fresh morning has dawned," he exulted, "a world-historic morning, like the one in which the bright, free, Hellenic consciousness broke out of the dusk of the Orient". The human race was at last awakening from a long slumber plagued by oppressive nightmares, and man could for the first time in centuries look with joy upon nature and his own natural desires.⁵⁵ Feuerbach thus helped Engels shed the last remnants of the Augustinian view of man weighed down by sin which he had drilled into him as a child by Pietist sermons. As we have seen, he had earlier repudiated this with his rational mind, but he had been unable to fully free himself emotionally. Feuerbach provided the required catalyst by showing him a Rousseauian vision of man as a child of nature, a totally free creature whose notion of God was no more than a compendium of his own best qualities. This 'Man' of Feuerbach's, no longer plagued by self-alienation, had

54. Ibid, WERKE (Ergänzungsband) I (2), p. 219; MECW, 2, pp. 237-238.

55. Ibid, WERKE (Ergänzungsband) I (2), pp. 219-220; MECW, 2, p. 238.

solved in principle the key problem of modern European life, the fragmentation of the human personality. By achieving a new consciousness of his achievements and potential, argued Engels, man could now overcome "the division in his own breast" and recognise the infinitely creative future which lay before him.⁵⁶ He blended this Feuerbachian vision of the 'new man' with the Hegelian theory of history as the progressive self-realisation of the Idea of Freedom. Hegel's vision of the gradual development of the human race to a perfection won by its own creative efforts, he suggested, would henceforth replace Christianity as the faith in the name of which men would move mountains.⁵⁷

So with the aid of Feuerbach, Engels, like Marx, integrated his Romantic ideals into Hegel's 'scientific' system. In the process he modified further his image of Hegel. Hegel's thought, he now averred, was not only in its core liberal and atheist, it was also fundamentally humanist, in the sense that Hegel made man, not God, the agent and focus of world history. All that was best in human life -- scientific knowledge, literature, music, art, morality and law, in short, civilised culture -- was the creation of man and man alone, and man's task for the future was to transcend his already magnificent achievements and create a rationally devised community composed of genuinely free and equal citi-

56. Ibid, WERKE (Ergänzungsband) I (2), p. 220; MECW, 2, pp. 238-239.

57. Ibid, WERKE (Ergänzungsband) I (2), p. 221; MECW, 2, p. 239.

of articles he had penned on the subject of press freedom, an issue dear to the hearts of Rhenish liberals.⁶⁰ This was the real start of Marx's career as a political journalist, which in its first phase lasted only a year.

Engels, too, saw in the Rheinische Zeitung a promising vehicle for the publication of his views, and also had articles accepted periodically by the paper from April 1842 onwards, the first being his analysis of the differences between North and South German liberalisms. Other Berlin Young Hegelians dispatched contributions also, and the Cologne newspaper became in the spring of 1842 something of a 'house-organ' for the Young Hegelian movement, not so much in the daily news columns of the paper as in the cultural supplements it published every few days.

Marx's articles in the Rheinische Zeitung in 1842, though they usually dealt with current political issues or other topical events, were philosophical in conception and Young Hegelian in spirit. Whereas in the spring and summer of 1842 Engels, who had initially been attracted to Hegel's philosophy of history and philosophical theology, was enthusiastically delving into the Wissenschaft der Logik and the Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse, Marx, who had waded into this technical philosophy of language

60. "Debatten über Pressfreiheit und Publikation der Landständischen Verhandlungen" ("Debates on Freedom of the Press and Publication of the Proceedings of the Assembly of the Estates"), MEGA I (1), pp. 179-229; MECW, 1, pp. 132-181.

several years before, was now more interested in the practical side of the Hegelian system. He had been highly impressed with Hegel's philosophy of law in the late 1830s, rejecting at that time Gans' and Ruge's criticism that it was excessively conservative. Now he reconsidered the Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts and found it less convincing. As a Young Hegelian he was still broadly in sympathy with Hegel's philosophical system, but, like Ruge and his followers, he now maintained that Hegel's own application of his principles to contemporary politics left much to be desired. In March 1842 he wrote to his friend Ruge declaring his intention to write an article criticising Hegel's philosophy of law and denouncing the Prussian constitutional monarchy (which Hegel had justified) as a "thoroughly self-contradictory and self-negating hermaphrodite".⁶¹ Yet critical though he was, Marx had not yet emancipated himself from Hegel's political theory -- it still provided the conceptual framework within which he approached politics. To understand his strategy as a political journalist in the Prussian Rhineland in 1842-43 it is therefore necessary to briefly examine the function of Hegel's philosophy of the state within contemporary German political life.

Hegel had transposed the Romantic conflict between the individual and society into a problem of political theory.

61. Marx to Ruge, 5/3/42. MEGA I, 1 (2), pp.268-269; MECU, 1, pp. 382-383.

He had posed the question of how it was possible to reconcile the interests of an individual person as a private citizen looking after his own material well-being with the collective interests of the political community as a whole. He framed this issue in terms of a perpetual antagonism between the State (meaning, in his terminology, the political community as a whole), and 'civil society' (the sum of individual people egoistically looking after their particular interests.) Given this perpetual conflict, Hegel argued, it was essential for there to exist intermediary institutions capable of 'mediating' the wills and actions of the individuals making up civil society, resolving their conflicting vested interests in the most rational way possible, and so transforming their anti-social behaviour into activities favourable to the State, i.e., the community as a whole at its most moral and rational. The reformed Prussian constitutional monarchy, he claimed, was well provided with such harmonising institutions: it possessed the enlightened monarch himself, the rational, efficient and neutral bureaucracy, and the provincial 'diets' in which the different 'estates' (social classes, roughly speaking), could express and reconcile their conflicting interests. In short, for Hegel, the Prussian state approximated, even if it did not fully exemplify, the rational state of the future in which freedom and morality would be embodied in law and political institutions, and in which the individual, despite his anti-social private

interests, would be a citizen fully in harmony with the community as a whole. In practice, therefore, whatever Hegel had himself intended, his political philosophy was a sophisticated rationale for the status quo, an affirmation that the Prussian state came close to an ideal political constitution and that it would be rash to change it.⁶²

When Marx began his journalistic career in Cologne he was convinced, like the rest of the Young Hegelians, that the actual regime in Prussia still had a long way to go before it became fully rational. In this sense he had already partly repudiated Hegel, but he nonetheless still thought that criticism and reform should aim at making the Prussian state more of a Hegelian 'universal' state. Such a state, he had already suggested to Ruge, would have to be a republic, not a constitutional monarchy, and he was convinced that it would have to adopt total press-freedom (to allow the process of 'criticism' and reform to continue unabated). But he had probably not at this time worked out how else his version of the 'universal' state would differ from Hegel's. During these months in Cologne Marx also came into contact again with Rhenish Saint-Simonianism, and -- more important -- was confronted for the first time with the existence of other forms of French socialism. Although he was not converted to socialism at this time, he did become aware of social problems and radical ideas which were later to induce him to

62. Hegel, Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, passim. See footnote 1.

transform his political stance. Two things in particular stimulated the nascent revolution in Marx's thought which began in Cologne: the economic difficulties experienced by the rural economy of the Rhineland, and the views of Moses Hess, one of the sub-editors on the Rheinische Zeitung. Since Marx wrote over two dozen articles for this newspaper during the twelve-month period he was connected with it, we can briefly trace the development of his thought and assess the circumstances in which he first consciously encountered, and rejected, French 'utopian' communism.

The Rheinische Zeitung was primarily created as the organ of the Cologne industrial and commercial bourgeoisie. It was financed by leading businessmen, including the powerful banker and future Prussian Prime Minister Ludolf Camphausen, and designed as a counterweight to the Kölnische Zeitung, the leading Catholic and conservative daily newspaper in the area. Its publication was originally approved by the Prussian government in the hope that it would defend the 'progressive' economic policies of Prussia (such as administrative centralisation and the Zollverein) against criticism by the traditionally-minded, quasi-separatist landowners who controlled the existing press. In return for these services, there was a tacit understanding that the government was prepared to tolerate some moderate criticism of its policies, criticism which the government censor would ensure did not go beyond the permitted bounds. The paper was staffed mainly by the sons of Cologne's middle-class liberals, and several

of these young men were Young Hegelians, acquaintances of Marx's in the Doctors' Club in Berlin. One of them, Gustav von Mevissen, was a Saint-Simonian; another, Moses Hess, had lived in France in the early 1830s, assimilated a mélange of ideas from the French socialists and communists he had met there, and created his own eclectic brand of communism. Because Mevissen, Hess and others sympathetic to radical ideas had influence on the editorial board, the Rheinische Zeitung's policy was more trenchantly critical of what it regarded as blundering or reactionary government policies than either its financial backers or the government itself had bargained for. Moreover, as we have seen, it was open to contributions from the Young Hegelians remaining in Berlin, and had quickly become something of a 'house-organ' for the Young Hegelian movement. In consequence it soon found itself subjected to drastic cutting by the censor, and at the end of 1842 the Prussian cabinet -- under diplomatic pressure from Russia -- decided to terminate the experiment in March 1843 when the shareholders would have had over a year's run for their money.

Marx's first published contribution to the paper, made in April 1842, was an article entitled "Debates on the Freedom of the Press". It was a straightforward defence of free speech and press freedom, revealing both Marx's liberalism and his Young Hegelianism. His method of argument was to measure the existing press laws against his ideal of what such laws would be like in a free, rational community where the government and legal system were in accord with the 'general

will' of the citizens. The principle of free speech, he claimed, was what mattered, so it was irrelevant to assert, as conservative spokesmen for the censorship did, that press freedom usually meant poor quality papers. He admitted that the uncensored French press was not perfect, but the problem, he argued, was not that it was too free; on the contrary, it was not free enough. "It is true", he remarked, "that it is not subject to a spiritual censorship, but it is subject to a material censorship, in the shape of high money sureties".⁶³ Marx was thus already aware of the power of money and the way it could be used to influence and control ideas. He also sensed the correlation which often existed between the opinions adopted by social groups and their material interests. Much of his article was devoted to a detailed commentary on the views of spokesmen for different estates in the Rhonish Provincial Assembly on the issue of press freedom, and he demonstrated at length how the advocates and opponents of censorship lined up according to the stake their 'estate' had in preserving or reforming the status quo. He revealed, too, his Young Hegelian hostility to what he regarded as shallow empiricism in politics.⁶⁴ Scorning the utilitarian argument that press freedom had proved in practice to be a useful and relatively harmless measure, he claimed instead

63. "Debatten über Pressfreiheit...", MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 214-215; MECW, 1, pp. 167-168.

64. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 201; MECW, 1, p. 154.

that censorship abrogated a universal human right since freedom was an essential characteristic of mankind. In adopting this approach he was, in effect, blending Hegelian Idealism with the French Enlightenment doctrine of natural rights. His political philosophy was thus an idealistic democratic liberalism, broadly in the tradition of Rousseau and Condorcet, and not dissimilar to Engels' synthesis of Borne and Hegel.

Engels' mind was, in fact, working along remarkably similar lines to Marx's during these months. In June 1842 he published in the Rheinische Zeitung a "Critique of the Prussian Press Laws" similar in thrust and tone to Marx's. He took the line that the current Prussian regulations were so imprecisely and peculiarly worded that, whether they intended to or not, they effectively prohibited any and all criticism of the government. Arguing that the Prussian Penal Code was incompatible with the latest government censorship instructions, he set out to demonstrate that the law was both repressive and absurd. Article 151 of the Prussian Penal Code, he pointed out, made illegal the publication of anything provoking 'displeasure and dissatisfaction' with the regime. This, he expostulated, meant, strictly speaking, that all opposition whatsoever to the government was prohibited, and that even the mildest criticism of Prussian law was a crime. He then challenged the government to prosecute him for his article. "I am honest enough to say straight out", he wrote defiantly, "that I have every intention of

provoking discontent and displeasure against #151 of the Prussian Penal Code with this article".⁶⁵

On this occasion the Prussian government chose to ignore Engels' verbal pinpricks, and even the censor disdainfully passed them unutilated. In fact, the Rheinische Zeitung's censor was comparatively tolerant throughout the spring and summer of 1842, which implied that some vestiges of liberalism remained within the Prussian administration, or at least its Rhineland wing. During these months, in fact, Marx was still fairly optimistic about the prospects for political reform in Germany, and he was still pinning his hopes on transforming the Prussian state gradually to make it increasingly accord with the Hegelian 'Idea' of the state as a universal, moral, and rational political community which would maximise freedom while maintaining order. In this frame of mind, he pounced on an article by Moses Hess in the Rheinische Zeitung on the question of the centralisation of the state in France and Germany and drafted a scathing reply.⁶⁶ It was the first time that he crossed swords with French socialist thought.

The author of the article, Moses Hess, was one of the

65. "Zur Kritik der Preussischen Pressgesetze" ("Critique of the Prussian Press Laws"), WERKE (Ergänzungsband) I (2), pp. 277-278; MECU, 2, p. 318.

66. Anon (Moses Hess), "Deutschland und Frankreich in Bezug auf die Zentralisationsfrage", Rheinische Zeitung, 17/5/42; reprinted in Moses Hess, Socialistische Aufsätze (ed. Th. Zlocisti), Berlin, Weltverlag, 1921, pp. 12-36.

first German socialists, but his ideas were largely derived from the writings of Babeuf, Fourier and Saint-Simon. Before he met Marx in August 1841 he had already authored three books, including Die heilige Geschichte der Menschheit (1837) and Die europäische Triarchie (1841), in which he popularised the view that egalitarian producers' communes were the best means for workers to gain freedom from the unjust and inequitable world of private property and from the dictatorial, undemocratic state.⁶⁷ His articles in the Rheinische Zeitung in the spring and summer of 1842 reflected this line of thought, emphasising the importance of social problems -- especially that of working-class poverty -- which, he suggested, were not susceptible of purely political solutions.

In the article which prompted Marx's reply, Hess had argued that neither the French nor the Prussian constitutional monarchy was able to find the correct balance between centralisation and decentralisation, between safeguarding individual liberty and the interests of the community as a whole; in France, he claimed, the law strangled liberty, whereas in

67. Moses Hess, Die heilige Geschichte der Menschheit, Stuttgart, Hallberger, 1837; Die Europäische Triarchie, Leipzig, Wigand, 1841. Hess' articles in the Rheinische Zeitung and elsewhere were collected in: Moses Hess, Sozialistische Aufsätze (ed. Th. Zlocisti), Berlin, Weltverlag, 1921, and in: Moses Hess, Philosophische und Sozialistische Aufsätze, 1837-50 (eds. Cornu and Mönke), Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1961.

On Hess, see: Auguste Cornu, Moses Hess et la gauche hégélienne, *op.cit.*, John Weiss, Moses Hess: Utopian Socialist, Detroit, Wayne State, 1960, and Edmund Silberner, Moses Hess: Geschichte seines Lebens, Leiden, Brill, 1966.

Germany liberty predominated to the detriment of social progress. The problem of state power, he continued, could be resolved only in a society where the individual citizen's goals were in harmony with those of the community and hence no conflict between the individual and the government, between liberty and law, was possible. In such a society, he concluded, the centralisation/decentralisation problem would no longer exist, because a centralised system of power and authority would be superfluous, and the redundant state would fade away. Hess admitted that such a disappearance of the modern state was not a practical proposition for the immediate future, but he affirmed that "theoretically", "from a high philosophical standpoint", it was the only correct solution. Marx had two main objections to this line of reasoning. He rejected Hess' anti-statism and the Saint-Simonian doctrine of the disappearance of the political state which Hess had endorsed. He also objected to Hess' suggestion that there could be a solution which was correct in theory but not, immediately, in practice. Philosophically correct solutions, he affirmed, were viable proposals for reform, not nebulous and impractical visions of an ideal world.⁶⁸

Dissatisfaction with Hess' "abstractions" stimulated

68. "Die Zentralisationsfrage in Bezug auf sich selbst und in bezug auf des Beiblatt der Rheinische Zeitung zu Nr 137, 17 Mai 1842" (The Question of Centralisation in itself and with regard to the Supplement to No. 137 of the Rheinische Zeitung, 17/5/42"), MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 230-231; MECU, 1, pp. 182-183.

Marx to think further about the mode of government he hoped to see established in Prussia, and also about the role that Young Hegelian 'critical' philosophy would play in creating it. He tackled these problems in a long article published in the Rheinische Zeitung in July 1842, "The Leading Article in No. 179 of the Kölnische Zeitung". 'Critical' philosophy, he affirmed, was a continuation of the Enlightenment, a scientific activity akin to physics, mathematics and medicine, with the task of subjecting politics and religion to the test of sovereign universal reason. Convinced that there was a "universal human nature", Marx argued that there must exist a particular mode of government best suited to it, the fundamental features of which could be elicited by rational enquiry. Philosophy, he maintained, should "ask what is true for all mankind, not what is true for some people", and its conclusions should pay no attention to the "boundaries of political geography". In other words, Germany needed a new liberal constitution based on rational principles just as much as any other European country, and no talk of Germany's unique history and political traditions should be allowed to obscure this.⁶⁹

What kind of political regime did Marx really want? He was unable, because of the censor, to come out overtly with

69. "Der leitende Artikel in Nr 179 der Kölnischen Zeitung" ("The Leading Article in No. 179 of the Kölnische Zeitung"), MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 239; MECW, 1, pp. 191-192.

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the suggestion that a democratic republic with universal suffrage was the answer to Germany's, and Europe's, problems. So he had to content himself with specifying, in rather abstract terms, some of the qualities which his ideal state would possess. It would, he remarked, implement the Romantic goal of a "free association of moral human beings" and, as such, would be "the realisation of freedom". It would be secular, separated from all Christian churches, and it ought to provide a comprehensive system of public education. He placed a great deal of emphasis on this last point, arguing that through the schools citizens could be taught to subordinate their own selfish interests to the good of the community as a whole. In this way, he hoped, the antagonism between the individual and the state would be overcome within the framework of a secular, democratic republic. He summed up his conception of the rational state as "a great organism, in which legal, moral and political freedom must be realised, and in which the individual citizen, in obeying the laws of the state, only obeys the natural laws of his own reason, of human reason".⁷⁰

An important feature of this ideal political society was that it was not static. Marx envisaged the government and people involved in a continuous process of mutual education and moral progress, a process which was entirely dependent

70. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 240-241 & 249; MECW, 1, pp. 192-193 & 202.

on the citizens' criticisms of government policies. To assure this, he asserted, there would have to be not only total press freedom, but also debate between rival political parties. Indeed he insisted that political parties were essential in a free society because they were the practical expression of the clash of different opinions upon which intellectual and moral advance depended. In short, they were the logical corollary of press freedom, and he obviously felt that his arguments for freedom of thought demonstrated equally the need for freedom of political organisation.⁷¹ His political philosophy, then, was a blend of Hegelian ethics with the kind of democratic liberalism that John Stuart Mill was later to articulate in On Liberty. Marx, however, still allotted the state a much greater role than would Mill, provided only that it were made thoroughly 'rational' and democratic.

Engels was fascinated by the same problems as Marx and Hess. Hostile to the monarchical principle as well as the repressive practice as the Prussian state, he suspected that the best way of curbing the government's authoritarianism was to limit its powers rather than trying fruitlessly to persuade it to make more rational use of them. Sympathetic to the 'natural rights' liberalism of Locke, Montesquieu and Condorcet, he looked to France and England as countries where

71. "Debatten über Pressfreiheit", loc. cit., passim. "Der leitende Artikel...", loc. cit., passim.

the individual citizen suffered less interference from the central government. In the fall of 1842 he paid a brief visit to Paris to evaluate at first hand how well the regime of Louis Philippe lived up to Montesquieu's ideal constitutional monarchy. He was disappointed in what he found. Prompted by his dislike of the methods of the Guizot government, he dispatched in September 1842 a contribution to the debate in the columns of the Rheinische Zeitung about the virtues of centralised government and the nature of the rational state.⁷²

In Engels' opinion, a centralised government administration was inevitable. "Centralisation", he wrote, "is -- and this is its justification -- the essence, the vital nerve of the state". He considered that a natural trend or urge to develop a central bureaucracy existed in any kind of state whatsoever, be it an absolute monarchy or a republic. This was just as true of America as it was of Russia, he added; federal structures were as prone to centralisation as regimes that made no pretence at devolving power to local communities. Government bureaucracy, then, was a fact of life, and an unavoidable one. The important thing for Engels was that its tentacles could be restricted to the area where they belonged. Contrary to what Hess believed, he argued, the existence of a centralised state did not entail the

72. "Centralisation and Freedom", Rheinische Zeitung, no. 261 (Supplement), 18/9/42; MECW, 2, pp. 355-359 (apparently omitted from MEGA and WERKE).

disappearance of individual liberty, since there was no need for the state to interfere in or control most aspects of human life.

Despite the high degree of centralisation in post-Napoleonic France, Engels suggested, it would be quite feasible for a genuinely liberal government -- unlike Guizot's, that is -- to avoid undue meddling in the everyday affairs of ordinary citizens. "Communal administration," he pointed out, "everything which affects individual citizens or corporations, can quite well be left free, and even must be left free..." Local government, then, need not be bureaucratized, but could be safely left in the hands of the townsfolk and villagers themselves. Engels' viewpoint entailed, as he readily acknowledged, a repudiation of the Hegelian idea of the state as an all-encompassing political community to which most Young Hegelians (including Marx) still subscribed.⁷³ He was toying with a Lockean perspective, repeating in the jargon of the Young Hegelian movement the 'limited state' doctrine of traditional British liberalism, in which the government's function was circumscribed to enforcing law and order. In effect, he was repudiating both Hess' Saint-Simonian vision of the political state withering away entirely, and Marx's Hegelian ideal of an organism uniting all its citizens in an ethical community structured on purely

73. Ibid, p. 359.

rational lines. Instead, he endorsed the view that human life was only to a limited degree political, and that men should be regulated in their conduct by a government only when their actions threatened the freedom of others. Paradoxically, the political theories of Engels, Hess and Marx in 1842 were each derived indirectly from the Enlightenment, but whereas Marx was drawing on Rousseau and the young Hegel, Hess was indebted to Morelly and Saint-Simon, and Engels was a disciple of Montesquieu and Condorcet.

Engels' "Centralisation and freedom" essay was significant in two other respects. It indicated that his opinion of contemporary French liberalism was low. Popular and democratic institutions had been destroyed in France, he claimed, and the French liberal party shown to be impotent by its servile acquiescence to a thoroughly corrupt, despicable and unpopular ministry. Guizot's ministry, he recognised, underlined the triumph of Louis Philippe over the liberals who had helped him into power, and represented "the bitterest humiliation" for all those who, like Engels himself, had expected the July Revolution to bring in its train the liberation of Europe. Not only would the French liberals do nothing in the near future to fight authoritarian regimes elsewhere in Europe, they were unable even to defend at home such basic principles as popular sovereignty, parliamentary government, press freedom, and independent juries. France, he concluded, "daily disavows her institutions, gives the lie to her history since 1789". Secondly, the article showed

that if Engels had temporarily given up on French liberalism as a practical revolutionary force, he had merely transferred his hopes across the Channel. The English workers, he suggested, were quite justifiably mounting a campaign of protest against Peel and the undemocratic English electoral laws. He recognised that Chartism was motivated only in part by political ideals, and that the reform agitation in Britain was to a large extent a product of the "bitter hunger" suffered by the English lower classes. In this Engels thought he perceived the Hegelian 'world-spirit' in action, with its characteristically devious method of bringing about progress through the subjective wills of its chosen agents. History, he proclaimed, was currently making of the English workers "the standard-bearers and representatives of a new principle of right".⁷⁴

Moses Hess, meanwhile, continued to develop his ideas in the columns of the Rheinische Zeitung. Liberalism, he argued, was incompetent to realise the rational state because it was unable to transcend interest-group politics. As the Revolution of 1830 in France had demonstrated, it ended up with unsatisfactory compromises, a politics of the 'golden mean' incapable of transforming society. In any case, Hess reminded his readers, these questions of political institutions and constitutional forms were irrelevant to the real

74. Ibid, p. 357.

issue, the fundamental social conflict between the poverty-stricken masses and an aristocracy of money. Mere politics, he claimed, were powerless to prevent or to solve the burgeoning social crisis engendered by the concentration of wealth in the hands of an elite. Excited by the social unrest revealed by Chartist demonstrations in England, Hess suggested that the new social crises had reached acute proportions in that country because industrialisation had progressed fastest and furthest there, and predicted that the antagonism between rich and poor in England would soon break out in the form of revolution.⁷⁵

In addition to his own articles, Hess, who virtually ran the Rheinische Zeitung in the summer of 1842, had reprinted from La Presse a manifesto by a group of French communists, adding a comment informing the German public that communism in France was a significant phenomenon worthy of serious study and respect. He also included a couple of pieces by the German communist Weitling discussing the housing problem and the future organisation of the state. Further, in October 1842, he wrote an account of an academic congress held at Strasbourg which discussed French socialist theories,

75. Moses Hess, "Das Rätsel des 19. Jahrhunderts", Rheinische Zeitung, 19/4/42; "Deutschland und Frankreich in Bezug auf die Zentralisationsfrage", Rheinische Zeitung, 17/5/42; "Die Tagespresse in Deutschland und Frankreich", Rheinische Zeitung, 12/6/42; "Korrespondenz von 24 Juni (Die Not in England)", Rheinische Zeitung, 26/6/42; "Religion und Sittlichkeit", Rheinische Zeitung, 4/8/42; "Die politische Parteien in Deutschland", Rheinische Zeitung, 11/9/42. Reprinted in Hess, Sozialistische Aufsätze (ed. Th. Zlocisti), op.cit., pp. 12-36.

and cited a speech by Pompery comparing the contemporary struggle of proletarians against the regime of property with the struggle of the bourgeoisie against the privileges of the nobility on the eve of the French Revolution, and arguing that the intransigence of the French bourgeoisie was likely to provoke a new revolution.⁷⁶ Hess, moreover, was not the only one of the Rheinische Zeitung staff intrigued by social problems and the situation in England and France. Mevissen, a young Rhenish industrialist sympathetic to Saint-Simonian ideas, visited England in the fall of 1842 and on his return wrote a three-article series for the Rheinische Zeitung, on the social consequences of the English Industrial Revolution. He too underlined the likelihood of social revolution in the wake of a severe economic depression, and reported a tendency in English society to polarise into two social groups, rich and poor, with the intermediary strata of artisans and middle classes diminishing in size.⁷⁷

Hess' interest in French socialist theory and the Rheinische Zeitung's interest in social unrest wherever it occurred in Europe provided a rival newspaper, the Augsburg Allgemeine Zeitung, with a pretext for charging the Rheinische

76. "Die Communisten in Frankreich. Aus dem von der Presse Mitgeteilter Manifest", Rheinische Zeitung, Beiblatt, no. 111, 21/4/42; "Die Regierungsform des communistischen Prinzips", Rheinische Zeitung, 29/9/42; "Die Berliner Familienhäuser", Rheinische Zeitung, 30/9/42. The news report on the Fourierist conference at Strasbourg appeared in the Rheinische Zeitung, 7/10/42. See Cornu, op.cit., pp. 60-65.

77. Rheinische Zeitung, Nos. 256, 261, 263, 13-21/9/42. Summarised by A. Cornu, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

Zeitung with having communist sympathies.⁷⁸ The newspaper's shareholders, too, were worried by what they saw as its excessively radical tone and preoccupations, and were anxious to avoid provoking government action to close it down forthwith. Since Hess was one of the founders of the paper, and had some support among the editorial staff, the businessmen financing the Rheinische Zeitung were reluctant to fire him. Their solution was to replace the nominal editor, Rutenberg, who had given Hess his head, with a stronger, more conservative personality. Their nominee was Karl Marx.

Camphausen and the other powerful men behind the scenes expected that Marx would be a moderate, cautious helmsman, keeping the paper's columns clear of radical rhetoric and excessive 'critical' philosophising but without stifling its lively tone. They chose him for the job because he had criticised the too free use made of contributions by the Berlin Young Hegelian radicals, because he had already written some eloquent but eminently liberal articles, and because he was known to be hostile to Hess' communism.⁷⁹ Marx thus

78. "Die Kommunistenlehren", Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung, 11/10/42.

79. In August 1842 Marx had written to Dagobert Oppenheim, one of the founders and editors of the Rheinische Zeitung, criticising the paper's rudderless editorial policy and expressing the view that a firm editor was needed (MEGA I, 1 (2), pp. 279-280; MEGA 1, pp. 341-392). His "Die Zentralisationsfrage" article was a de facto declaration of his opposition to the 'line' taken by Hess and his friends who were determining the newspaper's editorial policy at the time.

became editor of the Rheinische Zeitung in October 1842 shortly before its death warrant was signed in Berlin. His task was to find the narrow path -- if it existed -- between the Scylla of allowing the paper to degenerate into a 'safe' advocate of government policy and the Charybdis of overt democratic republicanism which would inevitably bring about its demise. In the event, he was to fail, though not through want of trying. But as editor, Marx was to be forced, during the next few months, to make up his mind concerning serious social problems exacerbated by the economic depression then affecting the Rhineland. He had also to clarify immediately the paper's editorial line on French socialism.

CHAPTER 3

FIRST CONTACTS WITH SOCIALISM, 1842-43

In his first decisions as editor of the Rheinische Zeitung Marx lived up to the expectations of the Cologne business community. He rejected or pruned numerous articles submitted by the Berlin Young Hegelians, and he got rid of Hess by sending him to Paris to act as the paper's French correspondent. Furthermore, his first public statement as editor was a categorical rejection of the accusation that the Rheinische Zeitung was sympathetic to communism, French or German.¹

Marx, however, was a personal friend of Hess', and he did **not** want it to appear that he was beginning his new job by repudiating one of his liveliest journalists. So he phrased this leader on communism carefully. The newspaper, he announced, accepted the validity of these radical ideas neither in theory nor in practice. It was absurd to suggest that the Rheinische Zeitung would support an attempted revolution by discontented workers stirred up by communist propaganda, and in any case an insurrection would have no chance whatsoever of success. The paper had merely expressed interest in the theoretical writings of certain French

1. "Der Kommunismus und die Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung" ("Communism and the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung"), Rheinische Zeitung, no. 289, 16/10/42; MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 260-265; MECJ, 1, pp. 215-221.

thinkers whose arguments were plausible enough to be taken seriously. Recent books by Considerant, Leroux, and "above all the sharp-witted work by Proudhon" required "long and profound study" in order to refute them adequately. This task, announced Marx, the staff of the Rheinische Zeitung would undertake, because they were persuaded of the power of ideas in guiding political and social change. Communist thought, he added, was really much more dangerous than working class insurrections because riots could always be suppressed by cannon fire whereas ideas could undermine the will to protect the established order. He thus perceived communist theory as a rival to his own democratic liberalism which could not be ignored, and promised that the Rheinische Zeitung would, in the future, "subject it to thoroughgoing criticism". This was in fact an echo of Hess' normal defence of his articles on French socialism: that socialism, whether one liked it or not, was a significant phenomenon, and that socialist thinkers were of high calibre and could not be written off as mere trouble-makers. Marx thus backed up Hess and disassociated himself and his paper from communism at the same time.²

Despite his references to five French socialists in this article (Fourier, Enfantin, Leroux, Considerant and Proudhon), it is doubtful whether Marx yet knew their writings

2. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 263; MECW, 1, pp. 220-221.

at first hand. More likely he knew about their ideas from Hess, who had just formed a socialist study circle in Cologne, which he attended occasionally between October and December 1842. The circle, frequented mainly by members of the Rheinische Zeitung staff, proposed to read and discuss recent works by French and German socialists, including Hess' own Die Europäische Triarchie, Weitling's Die Menschheit, wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte and his new Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit, Etienne Cabet's Voyage en Icarie, Victor Considerant's Destinée sociale, Charles Fourier's Théorie des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales, Pierre Leroux's De l'humanité, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's Qu'est-ce que la propriété?.³ The wording of Marx's leader implied that he considered these works important, but had yet to study them in depth, although he intended to do so in the near future. Whether he found time, trapped in the routine editorial tasks of the Rheinische Zeitung, to get

3. Moses Hess, Die Europäische Triarchie, Leipzig, Wigand, 1841; Wilhelm Weitling, Die Menschheit, wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte, Bern, 1845 (first edition, 1838), & Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit, Hamburg, Verlag des Verfassers, 1849 (first edition, Vivis, 1842); Etienne Cabet, Voyage en Icarie, roman philosophique et social, Paris, 1842 (first printed in a limited private edition in 1839); Victor Considerant, Destinée sociale, 3 vols, Paris, Libraires du Palais-royal, 1834-44 (the first two volumes had appeared by this time, in 1834 & 1838); Charles Fourier, Théorie des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales, Lyons, 1808 (second edition, 1841, as part of the Oeuvres complètes, 6 vols., (eds. J. Muiron & V. Considerant), Paris, 1840-45); Pierre Leroux, De l'humanité, 2 vols, Paris, Perrotin, 1840; Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Qu'est-ce que la propriété? ou recherches sur le principe du droit et du gouvernement, Paris, Brossard, 1840. On the circle, see McLellan, Young Hegelians, p. 146.

very far with this reading programme before his resignation as editor in March 1843, is doubtful. His habit, throughout his life, was to sprinkle his writings with references to what he had just perused, but allusions to French socialists are sparse in his numerous Rheinische Zeitung articles in the winter of 1842-43.

However, about this time Marx does seem to have read Théodore Dézamy's Calomnies et politique de M. Cabet (1842), which he presumably borrowed from Hess, and he also perused some issues of a French communist monthly, La Fraternité. This was edited by Richard Lahautière who, like Dézamy, was a former disciple of the most prominent French advocate of communism, Etienne Cabet. Lahautière, influenced by the socialist philosopher Pierre Leroux, offered a more 'spiritual' and humanitarian version of communism than Cabet and Dézamy, and his articles may well have stimulated Marx's interest in Leroux's egalitarian philosophy. In addition, Marx almost certainly skimmed through Proudhon's first mémoire on property. He was fascinated by Proudhon, whose legalistic arguments that private property was incompatible with natural rights appealed to him, and mentioned him in an editorial footnote in January 1843. Commenting on an article by a Berlin correspondent on the subject of taxation and incomes, Marx challenged the author's assertion that wages ought to vary in direct proportion to the number of hours worked and also according to the type of job done. "The most consistent, most penetrating socialist writer,

Proudhon, denies this proposition", he noted, "as also does the journal La Fraternité".⁴

Marx never followed up this issue of equality in wages in the Rheinische Zeitung, but the remark indicates that he was beginning to take an interest in such social problems. Furthermore, an echo of Proudhon's slogan that "private property is theft" appeared in Marx's first extended article as editor, "Debates on the Law on Thefts of Wood" (October-November, 1842). Concerned in this piece with the question of whether pilfering by peasants of dry wood from landowners' forests should be regarded as a crime, he denied that the gathering of fallen wood was a 'theft'. To convict the peasants of 'theft', he claimed, was to pervert the true meaning of the word, and implicitly to call into question the whole concept of private ownership. Relying on an argument from Qu'est-ce que la propriété, he inquired:

If every violation of property without distinction, without a more exact definition, is termed theft, will not all private property be theft? By my private ownership do I not exclude every other person from this ownership? Do I not thereby violate his right of ownership?⁵

4. "Red. Notiz über Proudhon zu einer Korrespondenz aus Berlin über Steuern", Rheinische Zeitung, no. 7, 7/1/43; MEGA I, 1 (2), pp. 141-142. Omitted from MECW.

5. "Verhandlungen des 6. rheinischen Landtags. Dritter Artikel. Debatten über des Holzdiebstahls-gesetz" (Proceedings of the Sixth Rhineland Provincial Assembly. Third Article. Debates on the Law on Thefts of Wood"), Rheinische Zeitung, nos. 298, 300, 303, 305 and 307, 25/10/42-3/11/42; MEGA I, 1 (1) pp. 266-304 (quotation, pp. 269-270); MECW, 1, pp. 224-263 (quotation, p. 228).

Marx, it appears, had not at this time repudiated private property, since he wanted to limit, not abolish, the legal rights of Rhineland landowners vis-a-vis the peasantry, but it looks as though glancing at Proudhon had raised some fundamental issues which he would think through during the next year. At any rate, Hess' insistence that liberal politics was not enough, together with this first reading of Qu'est-ce que la propriété, seems to have awakened him to social problems, and to the political influence wielded by owners of large estates. He analysed the recent legislation by the Rhineland Diet increasing penalties for pilfering, which the local peasantry regarded as a customary right. The Diet, he argued, was dominated by large landowners, its decisions were biassed in favour of this social group, and it had therefore demonstrated its incompetence as an impartial legislature.⁶ Hegel notwithstanding, it was obviously useless as an institution intended to arbitrate private interests for the good of the community as a whole. Laws made by interest groups, he asserted, were an expression of "abject materialism" and a "sin against the holy spirit of the people".⁷ So, while Marx still retained the faith that legal codes and legal institutions could rise above class considerations and embody 'absolute', 'universal' justice, he had come to recognise that in practice laws sometimes reflected

6. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 303; MECW, 1, p. 261.

7. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 304; MECW, 1, p. 262.

no more than the power of vested interests and influential social groups.

Despite his hostility to the Diets, he had not yet abandoned his programme of transforming Prussia into a 'rational' state. In an article entitled "On the Commissions of the Estates in Prussia", he argued that a united, efficient Prussian state could still be achieved, but only by transforming the Diets into a proper parliament in which all social groups were represented. Outlining his vision of the state as a united community of free citizens, he claimed that a democracy based on popular sovereignty would control the selfishness of vested interests and would correctly arbitrate conflicts between industry and agriculture.⁸ Apart from his acceptance of the principle of representation, Marx's political theory at the end of 1842 thus had much in common with Rousseau's. His "true state" was clearly a powerful institution, pervading all aspects of human life, yet he intended it to function in the moral interests of the whole society, which is presumably why he described it repeatedly as a "spiritual force". His basic problem remained the one that had perplexed Rousseau and Hegel: how to ensure that this 'universal', 'spiritual' role of the state would

8. "Die Beilage zu Nr. 335 und 336 der Augsburger Allgemeinen Zeitung über die ständischen Ausschüsse in Preussen" ("The Supplement to nos. 335 & 336 of the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung on the Commissions of the Estates in Prussia"), Rheinische Zeitung, nos. 345, 354, & 365, 11-31/12/42; MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 321-335; MECW, 1, pp. 292-306.

not succumb under the weight of sectional pressures. The institution in which Hegel had placed most faith was the government bureaucracy, staffed by enlightened reformers capable of judiciously weighing the claims of all citizens and making policy decisions to benefit the whole society. As a Young Hegelian Marx had believed that the Prussian bureaucracy, whatever its current imperfections, potentially lived up to Hegel's claims. Now he had second thoughts. He had lost his respect for the Prussian monarchy while a student in Berlin, and his observation of social conflict in the Rhineland had led him to discard the second of Hegel's mediatory institutions, the Diets. The third, the bureaucracy, was now to follow.

In January 1843, he was confronted with evidence which demonstrated strikingly that the Prussian state bureaucracy was far from an incarnation of Hegel's ideal. Or at least, that was how he interpreted the government's cold response to demands for tax concessions by Moselle winegrowers hard-hit by falling prices. Defending the Rheinische Zeitung's Moselle correspondent, who had drawn attention to the government's lack of sympathy for the plight of small farmers, he denounced Prussia's laissez-faire economic policies as the chief cause of the agricultural depression. Government spokesmen, he noted, had consciously adopted the line that the state should not interfere in the natural processes of the market. Quoting statements by officials in the Moselle, he charged that the government was claiming as

an excuse for inaction, that farmers were themselves responsible for their recent losses because they had over-expanded production in boom conditions a few years back. The real cause of the ruin of Moselle viticulture was quite different: the Zollverein; hence reality and "official reality" were poles apart, but since the bureaucracy had a stake in its own version, "official reality" ruled government policy and the poverty-stricken farmers still had to pay taxes and go bankrupt. The affair proved that the bureaucracy was not neutral but rather a powerful vested interest which would defend itself whenever threatened, even to the extent of wilfully denying the facts. Reality itself was not safe from the "overweening presumption of officialdom".⁹

But why did the bureaucracy react in this defensive and inhumane manner? The reason, he suggested, was that the upper echelons of the civil service were dependent for information concerning regional conditions on local officials who were too directly involved to be impartial and always tried to exonerate themselves from responsibility for anything which went wrong in their region. Yet the government was inclined to believe its own employees rather than its subjects, with the result that prejudice triumphed over morality and reason, and particular interests over the good

9. "Rechtfertigung des ++ Korrespondenten von der Mosel" ("Justification of the ++ Correspondent from the Mosel"), Rheinische Zeitung, nos. 15, 17, 18, 19 & 20, 15-20/1/43; MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 355-383, esp. pp. 368-371; MECW, 1, pp. 332-358, esp. pp. 343-347.

of society as a whole. In short, the bureaucracy was by its very nature incapable of playing the role Hegel ascribed to it; as one interest group among others, its supposed 'universality' of vision was an illusion.¹⁰

His experience as editor of the Rheinische Zeitung therefore confirmed Marx in his hostility to the illiberal regime of Frederick William IV, and he came to view Rhineland politics as a struggle between the interests of the aristocratic landowners, the rural small farmers, the urban bourgeoisie, and the state bureaucracy. Yet while he recognised that different social groups supported different economic policies and demanded different laws, he still believed it was possible to devise a form of government transcending particular interests. Furthermore, he was employing the concept 'interest group' rather than that of 'class'; he did not see the policies of the Prussian state as the expression of the rule of one class, rather they were the result of compromises between the desires of merchants, landowners and government administrators. He was not satisfied with the outcome of these compromises, which he considered neither rational, moral, nor favourable to the majority of the inhabitants of the Rhineland. But he had few alternative policies to offer: a free press, a democratic parliamentary system, and tax-reliefs for impoverished small farmers were

10. Ibid., esp. MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 372-373; MECW, 1, pp. 347-349.

his only panaceas. On the major economic issue of the day in the eyes of the Rhenish bourgeoisie -- free trade or protection -- he hedged, coming out in favour of free trade in principle, but in the same breath affirming the need to protect German trade and industry from English competition, while doubting that protective tariffs were the best way to achieve this goal.¹¹ One thing is certain -- Marx, in the winter of 1842-43, had little interest in or sympathy for either artisans or unskilled factory labourers. Economic questions were beginning to impinge on his consciousness, but he had yet to question the benefits of industrialisation, and he had still to face the ramifications of a major social problem of which he was still only dimly aware: mass poverty.

One of the casualties of Marx's 'new broom' when he was first appointed editor of the Rheinische Zeitung had been an article written by Engels in autumn 1842 on Frederick William IV. There was little hope of any other German publication printing the essay, a hard-hitting analysis of the psychology of the Prussian sovereign, so Engels submitted it instead to Georg Herwegh, a Young Hegelian who was planning to publish a collection of censored articles in Switzerland. It duly appeared the next year as part of Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz.¹²

11. "Über Schutzzölle" ("The Industrialists of Hanover and Protective Tariffs"), Rheinische Zeitung, no. 326, 22/11/42; MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 308-309; MECW, 1, p. 286.

12. "Friedrich Wilhelm IV, König von Preussen", in Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz (ed. Georg Herwegh), Zürich und Winterthur, Verlag des Literarischen Comptoirs, 1843; WERKE, 1, pp. 446-453; MECW, 2, pp. 360-367.

The essay, which summarised Engels' opinions on German politics in the summer of 1842, was his last piece of work as a comparatively orthodox Young Hegelian. His central argument was that the Prussian monarch was seeking to re-establish a Christian-feudal absolute monarchy, and was receiving the support of the leading exponents of orthodox theology and conservative Romanticism. German intellectual life, he asserted, was now polarised into antagonistic camps: on the one hand those who accepted the principle of free thought, and on the other those who had retreated into reactionary dogmas. He placed in the first camp political liberals and radical theologians like Bauer and Feuerbach, and in the second Romantic political theorists like Adam Müller, the jurist Friedrich von Savigny, and orthodox theologians like Krummacker and Heinrich Leo. Frederick William IV, he suggested, possessed a fairly comprehensive and internally coherent ideology based on the ideas of these conservatives. He singled out the principle of legitimacy, the 'precepts of biblical morality', the desire to separate Church and State, and nostalgia for the Middle Ages as the main tenets of this reactionary Romanticism.¹³

After explaining what the Prussian monarch was trying to achieve, Engels posed the question of whether he could succeed. The feudal restoration, he answered, was bound to come into total conflict with resurgent Prussian liberalism

13. Ibid, WERKE, 1, pp. 447-451; MECU, 2, pp. 361-365.

since the King refused to recognise any "universal, civic, or human rights", but admitted only "corporate rights, monopolies, privileges". A clash between even moderate liberals and the monarchy was therefore imminent. Moreover, the Romantic ideologues would also come up against the government bureaucracy which possessed its own standards of efficiency and 'rationality'. This was too powerful for even the Crown to risk open battle, and it would work successfully behind the scenes to block any far-reaching changes. Already Frederick William IV had been manoeuvred into disavowing his ministers' most forthright actions, and had settled for political compromises which were really victories for the status quo. The monarch was therefore caught in a battle on two fronts: against liberalism on his left, and against the hardheaded conservatism of vested interests (including the bureaucracy) on his right. In these circumstances, Engels concluded, it was highly unlikely he would ever be able to put his programme into effect.¹⁴

Confident, then, that Frederick William's 'Romantic feudalism' was doomed to defeat, Engels hoped that his onslaught against press freedom and representative government would nonetheless goad Prussian liberals into militant action. Prussian public opinion, he predicted, would center more and more around two questions: representative government and freedom of the press. The latter would be conceded

14. Ibid, WEREKE, 1, p. 453; MECW, 2, p. 367.

by the King in the near future and would be followed within a year by a liberal constitution. Beyond that, he thought, it was impossible to guess, except that if a liberal regime were established in Prussia it would upset the existing European balance of power since the alliance with Russia would be automatically annulled. He had his doubts whether a moderate constitutional monarchy would endure for very long. It was highly significant, he remarked at the end of his essay, that Prussia's present situation closely resembled that of France on the eve of the Revolution of 1789.¹⁵

There seems little question, therefore, that Engels in the fall of 1842 still thought that there would be a liberal revolution in Germany in the very near future, and that it would take the form of a spate of political concessions forced on the Prussian monarchy by middle-class public opinion led by liberals from the intelligentsia. Yet about the time he wrote this article he met three men whose ideas were to contribute considerably to the rapid evolution which his thought underwent in the next few years. One, Karl Marx, was himself still a liberal and was to have no substantial influence on Engels until 1844. But the other two, Wilhelm Weitling and Moses Hess, were already self-professed communists. Hearing and reading their views seems to have prepared Engels for his conversion to socialism, although this conversion -- so far as the evidence allows us

15. Ibid.

to judge -- actually occurred in Manchester at the end of 1842.

Engels encountered Weitling briefly in Berlin in the late summer of 1842, and thereafter read the newly published Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit. He was favourably impressed, indeed he apparently reacted so positively that he promised Weitling that he would try to arrange foreign translations of the work.¹⁶ He did not, however, become a disciple of Weitling's. Rather he seems to have decided that the lower classes were not as wild and irrational as he had previously assumed, that they warranted closer observation, and that he should delve into as much European socialist literature as he could lay hands on. Weitling, then, stimulated his interest in the working classes and socialist theory, but failed to wean him immediately from liberalism.

Knowing that he would soon be sent by his father to learn the trade of textile manufacturing in Lancashire, Engels visited Marx in the Rheinische Zeitung offices in Cologne in October 1842 to ascertain whether the paper would print reports from Manchester on the British political scene. Marx, who knew Engels only as one of the Berlin extremists whose contentious articles had caused the shareholders' revolt which had given him his editorial chair, gave the young correspondent a cool reception. Still, good copy was hard

16. Gustav Mayer, Friedrich Engels: Eine Biographie, Hague, Nijhoff, 1934; English translation (abridged), Friedrich Engels: A Biography, N.Y., Knopf, 1936.

to come by, and the paper lacked a permanent English reporter, so he told him that his reports would be judged on their merits and printed if incisive and factual. This was not the enthusiastic welcome for which Engels had hoped, but it was satisfactory enough. In any case, when it became known that he was "Oswald, the Montagnard", he was received warmly by Moses Hess and the left-wing of the editorial staff, who had more sympathy than Marx for the Berlin group.

He spent a week in Cologne, devoted mainly to long arguments with Hess on the subject of communism. He was interested to learn more about the personalities and views of French socialists, and Hess, who was about to return to Paris as the paper's French correspondent, could supply him with many details. Hess also repeated the opinions he had expressed in his books and the columns of the Rheinische Zeitung before the recent clamp-down. He later claimed that he converted Engels to his own views at this time, stating in a letter to his friend Berthold Auerbach that "he, an Anno I revolutionary, departed from me an enthusiastic communist".¹⁷ This was an exaggeration. But almost certainly Engels was stimulated by his conversations with Hess to read the latter's most important book, Die Europäische Triarchie, which had been published two years previously. It no doubt affected the way he perceived England when he arrived there some weeks later.

17. Hess to Auerbach, 19/7/43, in Moses Hess, Briefwechsel (ed. E. Silberner), Hague, Mouton, 1959, p. 103.

England in 1842, in the depths of a severe economic depression, was a revelation to him. The half-decade between 1837 and 1842 was a watershed in English history, the period of transition from the first stage of the Industrial Revolution based on textiles to the second stage based on coal and iron and symbolised by the railway locomotive. Conditions for the majority of wage-earners were probably worse than they had ever known, food prices were high, real wages in some cases had declined, unemployment was severe and prolonged, and certain sections of the work-force (the hand-loom weavers were the most striking example) had been rendered redundant by technological advances. Not surprisingly, popular movements of protest -- in particular Chartism -- were strong and vociferous, and 'the social question' could no longer be ignored by the ruling groups represented in the English parliament. Engels was plunged into this whirlpool at one of the places where the current was strongest: Manchester. His attempts to comprehend the 'condition of England' were reflected in a set of articles he dispatched to the Rheinische Zeitung in November-December 1842.¹⁸

English politics, he argued, were in essence quite simple, because they revolved not around struggles over principles but around conflicts of material interests. There were three main social classes, and hence three main political parties in England: the Tories (representing the landed

18. WERKE, 1, pp. 454-467; MECU, 2, pp. 358-382.

aristocracy), the Whigs (representing the moneyed élite), and the Radical Democrats (representing the mass of workers). The main issue in contemporary British politics, the repeal of the Corn Laws, reflected an attempt by the merchants and manufacturers to deal with the current economic depression by reducing wage-costs and hence prices of manufactured goods, in the hope that cheaper exports would stimulate demand and allow renewed expansion of production. Since cheap bread was in the interests of businessmen, industrial workers and tenant farmers, a coalition of these groups (that is, the Whigs and the Radical Democrats) had formed to campaign for the abolition of duties on imported corn, and, Engels believed, were bound to be successful despite the intransigent opposition of most Tory landowners. Although highly impressed with the power of the Anti-Corn Law League as a propaganda machine, he was sceptical concerning its panacea for England's economic ills. The problem, he suspected, was more deep-rooted than the liberals realised.¹⁹

England, Engels stressed, had become an "industrial state", by which he meant a country with a capacity for industrial production in excess of domestic demand. She had to import food and raw materials and export manufactured goods to pay for these, and so was dependent on foreign trade.

19. "Stellung der politischen Partei" ("The Position of the Political Parties"), Rheinische Zeitung, no. 358, 24/12/42; WERKE, 1, pp. 461-463; MECW, 2, pp. 375-377.

As other countries industrialised, however, they would cease to need English products, and England would find the terms of trade turn increasingly against her. Expedients like the repeal of the Corn Laws could not alter the basic "contradiction" inherent in an industrial state, the imbalance between productive capacity and domestic demand which gave rise to the perennial task of expanding exports in the face of tariffs and foreign competition. The British textile industry, he explained, had previously lived off colonial markets, but these had reached saturation point, and competition for continental markets was growing ever fiercer. Repeated over-production crises were therefore unavoidable, and England could not escape the necessity of cutting back production.²⁰

Engels thus considered English industrialisation as already excessive, and he warned that it was having terrible social consequences. Although it had made the nation rich, it had also created a rapidly multiplying stratum of semi-paupers, lacking property and living from hand to mouth. Claiming that more than a third of English people belonged to this class and that trade recessions periodically reduced them to starvation, he contended that urban workers -- all of whom he labelled "proletarians" -- were beginning to become aware of the power their numbers gave them and would

20. "Die inneren Krisen" ("The Internal Crises"), Rheinische Zeitung, nos. 343-344, 9-10/12/42; WERKE, 1, pp. 456-460; MECW, 2, pp. 370-374.

soon rebel against their fate.²¹ He was convinced as early as December 1842 of the potential for social revolution inherent in an industrial work-force made desperate by a severe and prolonged slump. Manchester had lived up to Hess' prediction. Engels was shocked to the core by the poor wages and working conditions of the Lancashire coal-miners and iron-workers, and by the endemic unemployment in the industrial towns of northern England and Scotland. The textile workers, he found, were not so badly off as most other industrial workers because the industry had found a new market in China and was expanding production, but even their relative prosperity was likely to be short-lived.²² His general conclusion, after two months of observing the condition of workers in Lancashire, was that their life was daily becoming more precarious. Industrialisation in England had created not only a large class of propertyless wage-labourers totally dependent on economic prosperity, it had burdened the country with a pool of unemployed "paupers" which it was impossible to get rid of. Since the 'do-nothing' state refused to take responsibility for these permanently unemployed outcasts, they were forced to resort to crime and prostitution. This, he contended, was the real cause of the English 'social

21. Ibid, WERKE, 1, p. 459; MECW, 2, p. 373.

22. "Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England" ("The Condition of the Working Class in England"), Rheinische Zeitung, no. 359, 25/12/42; WERKE, 1, pp. 464-465; MECW, 2, p. 378-379.

problem': excessive industrialisation produced repeated overproduction crises, unemployment produced crime, and the only response of the state was punitive law-enforcement. "The state", he remarked bitterly, "does not care whether starvation is bitter or sweet; it locks these people up in prison or sends them to penal settlements, and when it releases them it has the satisfaction of having converted people without work into people without morals".²³ The impact of Manchester thus made him have second thoughts about the virtues of the traditional English liberal philosophy of government.

He recognised that Chartism and the Anti-Corn Law League were two forms into which mass discontent had been channelled, and saw another in the strike waves of the previous summer which had failed through lack of leadership and the strikers' reluctance to resort to force. So far, he pointed out, working-class unrest had scarcely stepped beyond the law, mainly because the Chartists hoped to gain their demands by legal means, through parliament. The Chartist strategy of "legal revolution" -- in Engels' view a contradiction in terms -- had paralysed the labour movement in 1842, but its manifest failure had now left the way clear for more drastic measures. He believed that the poverty-stricken workers had drawn from the debacle the conclusion

23. Ibid.

that a peaceful transformation of society was impossible and that an insurrection was unavoidable.²⁴ The vital question for English politics, he argued, was therefore whether violent revolution was on the cards or whether Britain, thanks to its wealth and flexible institutions, would be able to ride out the storm. British public opinion almost unanimously accented that a few reforms would enable the country to muddle through, but he, Engels, considered this attitude myopic because he was convinced that the Whigs would lose their present working-class support to the Chartists and that the principle of popular sovereignty would prove invincible.²⁵ Not that the middle class would ever voluntarily renounce its majority in the House of Commons by granting universal suffrage. To obtain democracy, Chartism would be forced to abandon its reformist political strategy and opt for social revolution, and, in the next severe over-production crisis, it would be followed by vast masses of starving workers.²⁶ In view of England's disastrous economic position, Engels concluded, widespread famine among the workers could not be avoided for much longer, and when it did occur "then fear of death from starvation will be stronger than fear of the law". Revolution, he reiterated, was inevitable

24. "Die inneren Krisen", loc. cit., WERKE, 1, p. 460; MECW, 2, p. 374.

25. Ibid, WERKE, 1, p. 456; MECW, 2, pp. 370-371.

26. "Stellung der politischen Partei", loc. cit., WERKE, 1, p. 461; MECW, 2, pp. 375-376.

in England: a violent social upheaval would usher in universal suffrage and popular sovereignty.²⁷

There is no direct evidence on Marx's reaction to these overtly revolutionary dispatches from England. But he was sufficiently impressed to print them in the Rheinische Zeitung despite the probability that in so doing he would further anger the Prussian government and alarm his Rhenish middle-class employers. As we have seen, he did not at this time have Engels' sympathy for urban workers, nor was he much attracted to revolutionary socialism. So what probably interested him most in Engels' articles was the class analysis of English politics: the clear-cut correlation suggested between material interests, social classes, and political parties.

Marx resigned as editor of the Rheinische Zeitung in March 1843, some weeks before the Prussian government implemented its earlier decision to close the paper down. Like Engels, he was by this time a republican democrat committed to the ideal of popular sovereignty. As we have seen, his six months' experience as editor had confirmed his earlier suspicion that constitutional monarchy was an irrational sham, and had convinced him that all three of Hegel's harmonising agents -- Crown, Diets, and bureaucracy -- were impotent to regulate the continual clash of material interests that constituted contemporary politics. Politically he was still a

27. "Die inneren Krisen", loc. cit., WERKE, 1, p. 460; MECW, 2, p. 374.

liberal, but he was in the process of discarding his Young Hegelianism. Hess, Mevissen and Engels, together with his own investigations into the plight of Mossele small farmers, had shown him that there were important problems which neither Hegelian nor Young Hegelian philosophy had tackled adequately. He was searching for a new theoretical framework for his political views, and had begun to dip into the eighteenth century French 'classics', finding Rousseau the most sympathetic of the philosophes. He had once again come into contact with Rhenish Saint-Simonianism, and -- more important still -- had been confronted for the first time with the existence of other forms of French socialism, especially Proudhon's critique of private property.

As his resignation indicated, Marx had come to conclude, by the spring of 1843, that the Rheinische Zeitung had outlived its usefulness, and that the repressive political climate in Prussia made a policy of 'loyal opposition' impossible. The government, he remarked, in closing down the paper, had given him back his intellectual freedom, and he was determined to make use of it.²⁸ He planned, after marrying Jenny von Westphalen, to travel and study before taking on another journalistic post outside the reach of the Prussian censor. His views had evolved considerably during the past year, and he felt the need to take stock of

28. Marx to Ruge, 25/1/43; MEGA I, 1 (2), pp. 293-294; MECW, 1, pp. 396-98.

himself intellectually. Between the spring of 1842 and the spring of 1843 he had, in fact, worked out in some detail his reasons for rejecting the regime of Frederick William IV, assembled the elements for his subsequent critique of Hegel's philosophy of law and the state, and become disillusioned with the prospects of reforming Prussia through 'critical' philosophy and journalism. But there were two topics in particular which he felt he still badly needed to study: the history of liberal democracy (especially in France), and French socialist theory. Although he had come across examples of contemporary French socialist thought in 1842 and had glanced through a couple of books by Dézamy and Proudhon, Marx had not as yet come to terms with the topic. But his interest had been aroused, and he made it one of his intellectual projects for the summer of 1843.

Before buckling down to work he took a vacation in Holland. In a letter he wrote from that country to Arnold Ruge, he made it quite clear that he had no illusions about the reactionary and repressive character of the Prussian government: "the mantle of liberalism has been discarded and the most disgusting despotism in all its nakedness is disclosed to the eyes of the whole world".²⁹ Like Engels, he predicted that a liberal revolution was impending in Germany. Two months later, in May 1843, he again mailed Ruge

29. Marx to Ruge, March 1843, in "Ein Briefwechsel von 1843", Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, Paris 1844; MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 557; MECW, 3, p. 133.

some of his thoughts on German current affairs and political theory. On this occasion he disclosed his grounds for expecting the demise of the Prussian monarchy. Frederick William IV's attempt to resurrect a quasi-feudal absolutism was bound to come into conflict with a coalition of all opponents of the regime, both middle class and lower class. In any case, Marx argued, the monarchy was obviously anachronistic in the modern world of trade and industry. The new industrial economy, he suggested, was based on "exploitation of the people", and this worsening exploitation, combined with the effects of population expansion, was leading to "a rupture within present-day society, a rupture which the old system is not able to heal, because it does not heal and create at all, but only exists and consumes".³⁰

This was the first time that Marx focussed on industrialisation as a major cause of social upheaval, and also the first time that he had characterised the Rhineland economy as one based on private ownership and exploitation. Prussia, he expostulated, was a "dehumanised world", the product of "centuries of barbarism", which combined a political despotism of the most traditional kind with the cruelty and suffering produced by modern commerce and industry. As such it provoked the implacable hostility of both "enlightening humanity" (by which Marx presumably meant liberal reformers

30. Marx to Ruge, May 1843, in "Ein Briefwechsel von 1843", *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, 33. Jg.; ed. 1, 1 (1), p. 565; MECW, 3, p. 141.

like himself) and "suffering mankind", the peasants and artisans who were the victims of the new economic regime. In this way he first suggested the idea of an alliance between intellectual critics of the status quo and the lower classes most antagonistic to it for material reasons. But although he mentioned the impoverished lower classes as a revolutionary force, Marx was not primarily interested in abolishing the capitalist economy, which he apparently regarded as a mere by-product of the "philistine world" ruled by the despotic Prussian state. The roots of the problem were in his view political and cultural. Dehumanisation was more extreme in Germany than in France, he claimed, because the French Revolution had once "restored man" by giving him the sense that the world belonged to him and that he was in control of his own destiny.³¹

Marx's use of the term "dehumanisation" to characterise the fundamental ills of German society indicates that he still subscribed to the Romantic critique of the modern world which he had found in Schiller, Schlegel and Hölderlin. The continuity in his thought is further demonstrated by the following account which he gave Ruge of his political ideal and the means by which this ideal could be implemented. "The self-confidence of the human being, freedom", he explained,

has first of all to be aroused again in the hearts of these people. Only this feeling, which vanished

31. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 562; MECW, 3, p. 137.

from the world with the Greeks, and under Christianity disappeared into the blue mist of the heavens, can again transform society into a community of human beings united for their highest aims, into a democratic state.³²

Here we see Marx again invoking the Greek polis as the paradigm of a democratic community in which the individual was free to develop his own gifts to the full and yet worked simultaneously with his fellow-citizens in deciding how the society should be run. In the spring of 1843 he still believed that a democratic republic based on universal suffrage would provide the constitutional mechanism required to create a modern approximation to this ideal community. Although he was beginning to be aware of 'the social problem' he had not yet grasped how it related to the problem of 'dehumanisation', which he still viewed in primarily political terms.

Engels, too, knew relatively little about French socialism in the spring of 1843, although he probably was more aware of it than Marx, and he certainly was much more sympathetic to socialist ideas and the demands of factory workers and artisans. He had received some instruction in the subject of French socialism from Moses Hess before leaving Germany for Manchester, and Hess sent him a copy of Lorenz von Stein's Der Socialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs, an account of the different varieties of Parisian socialist groups. Engels was not impressed by the

32. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 561-652; MECU, 3, p. 137.

work. He dismissed its contents as "dull" and "miserable", and argued in an article in the Schweizerischer Republikaner that English socialism was of higher quality and more significant than French socialism. "The English socialists", he wrote, "are far more principled and practical than the French, which is especially due to the fact that they are engaged in an open struggle against the various churches and do not want to have anything to do with religion".³³

Engels, in fact, had been astonished at the size and vitality of the English labour movement, and at the intellectual standard of English socialist theory. A number of different things had impressed him favourably about working class political and intellectual activity in the English West Midlands which, by the early summer of 1843, he had been observing for six months. One, as the above quotation indicates, was the strength of lower class atheism and anti-clericalism. In the same Schweizerischer Republikaner he described the activities in Bristol of the notorious militant atheist Charles Southwell, and claimed that the leading English socialist theoreticians, Robert Owen and John Watts, were equally hostile to Christian theology. Watts, indeed, seems to have played a prominent part in Engels' conversion to socialism, which was well under way by the summer of 1843.

33. "Briefe aus London (I-IV)" ("Letters from London"), Schweizerischer Republikaner, nos. 39, 41, 46 & 51, 16/5/43-27/6/43; WERKE, 1, pp. 468-479; MECW, 3, pp. 379-391; (Quotation, WERKE, 1, p. 473; MECW, 3, p. 385).

He was the leading socialist orator and pamphleteer operating in Manchester, and he expounded a down-to-earth brand of Owenism which seems to have had considerable appeal for a portion of the Manchester workers. It appealed to Engels too. Watts, he wrote, was "an outstanding man, who has written some very talented pamphlets on the existence of God and on political economy". He was also impressed with the oratorical technique and factual command possessed by other Owenite propagandists whose meetings he had attended.³⁴

Apart from the Owenites' atheism, Engels approved of their grasp of economic issues and their willingness to base their socialism on political economy. He was delighted to find that English socialist theory was empirical and realistic, far different in tone from Hegelian philosophy. Actually, he admitted, this was not always the case, because the "founder of the socialist movement, Owen" sometimes wrote as badly and obscurely as a German philosopher, but he also had his lucid moments, which compensated. He was rather ambivalent towards Owen himself, preferring the more concrete, issue-oriented pamphlets of Watts and O'Connor, but he recognised one great virtue in Owen's socialism: its comprehensiveness. Reading between the lines of Engels' comments on Owenism in the Schweizerischer Republikaner one can deduce that in the summer of 1843 he had perceived the importance of Robert Owen's writings and had begun to study

34. Ibid, WERKE i, p. 474; MECW, 3, p. 385.

them, but had not yet made up his mind about them. He was intrigued and impressed by Owen and Owenism, but he was not yet won over.³⁵

His support for Feargus O'Connor and Chartism, on the other hand, was unequivocal and enthusiastic. He had modified his own class-analysis of English politics which he had given in his deutsche Zeitung articles the previous year. He argued that there were four main social classes, or main political 'parties' corresponding with them: the Tories, supported by the aristocracy and the Church; the Whigs, serving the manufacturers; the dissenters; the Radicals, representing the middle class; and the Chartists, whose mass base was composed of "the working men, the proletariat".³⁶ Owenism, Chartism was making great strides and was a force to be reckoned with in English political life. The leading political issue in the Midlands, he reported, was the struggle for the minds and money of the workers between the middle-class Anti-Corn Law League and Feargus O'Connor's National Chartist Association. Optimistically believing the accounts of his Chartist friends, he asserted that O'Connor was winning, and claimed that in the industrial towns of England "the League cannot call a single public meeting without being most ignominiously

35. Ibid, WERKE, 1, pp. 473-475; MECW, 3, pp. 385-386.

36. Ibid, WERKE, 1, p. 468; MECW, 3, p. 379.

trounced by the Chartists". Clearly, for Engels the political battle between League and Association was an overt class struggle between manufacturers and merchants on one side and poor workers on the other, and there was no question as to where his sympathies lay. His enthusiasm for Chartism led him to repeat the most outlandish of its spokesmen's claims, such as that "the Chartists can easily collect a million pennies weekly" or "the mass of agricultural labourers will be impelled to take the side of the Chartists".³⁷ He was even inclined to write off the League and the urban middle classes it represented as a spent force in English politics, suggesting that the imminent battle for power in England would be between the Tory establishment and the Chartist working-class.

The workers, Engels was convinced, were the most progressive element in English society. In England, he reported in his first Schweizerischer Republikaner article, the "remarkable fact" was that "the lower the position of a class in society, the more 'uneducated' it is in the usual sense of the word, the more closely it is connected with progress, and the greater is its future".³⁸ As an example he cited the different responses of the upper-middle class Whigs and the working-class Chartists to Sir James Graham's parliamentary Bill of March 1843 which aimed at regulating child

37. Ibid, WERKE, 1, pp. 472-473; MECW, 3, p. 384.

38. Ibid, WEREK, 1, p. 468; MECW, 3, pp. 379-380.

labour in factories and providing elementary education for working-class children. The Whigs, he related, had completely rejected the Bill on the grounds that it would oust the Non-conformists from primary education and would cause difficulties to manufacturers by restricting working hours. Engels was shocked, if no longer very surprised, at what he regarded as a clear case of callous inhumanitarianism. He himself praised the "general humane tendency" of the Bill, and noted with approval the considerable support it had received from socialists and Chartists in Lancashire.³⁹

Chartism and socialism were thus "progressive" in Engels' eyes because they had a moral conscience, unlike the 'laissez-faire' liberalism of the Manchester manufacturers whom he had occasion to meet while learning the textile business in Lancashire. But this was by no means the only important difference he had detected between Manchester businessmen and Manchester workers. What struck him most forcefully was the intellectual poverty of middle-class 'society' compared to the high quality of working-class culture. He was utterly contemptuous of what he had seen of the English intelligentsia. For three hundred years, he alleged, all the educated and "learned people have been deaf and blind to the signs of the times"; English universities were pitifully bad, English theologians and scientists were ignorant of the best work done on the Continent, and the level of scholarship

39. Ibid, WERKE, 1, p. 470; MECW, 3, p. 381.

among political economists and practising politicians was abysmal. Middle class intellectual life was permeated with "inconsistency and hypocrisy", he continued, and the vast majority of new books published each month were "miserable reactionary publications". Two examples he gave to demonstrate this intellectual poverty were the widespread acceptance of the Malthusian theory of population -- "Malthusian nonsense" he called it -- and the impossibility of finding a respectable publisher for an English translation of Strauss' Das Leben Jesu, a book dear to Engels' heart.⁴⁰ Engels, in short, had found Manchester 'society' an intellectual backwater compared with Berlin and Cologne.

His scathing attack on the quality of English middle-class life was not just the product of 'culture-shock'. This undoubtedly played a part: he found English intellectual currents different from those of Germany and tended to assume that 'different' meant 'worse'. Yet it was not only German chauvinism, because Engels was equally amazed, but favourably impressed, at the high level of lower-class intellectual life. "At first one cannot get over one's surprise", he wrote in the Schweizerischer Republikaner, "on hearing in the Hall of Science the most ordinary workers speaking with a clear understanding on political, religious and social affairs; but when one comes across the remarkable popular pamphlets and hears the lectures of the Socialists...one ceases

40. Ibid, WERKE, 1, p. 469; MECW, 3, p.380.

to be surprised".⁴¹ He ascribed the high quality of popular culture primarily to the educational efforts of the Owenites, but he also noted the availability of cheap editions of the works of Rousseau, D'Holbach, Voltaire, Byron, Shelley and Thomas Paine. These printings were put out by small radical booksellers aiming at a working-class market, he remarked, and so such classics of 'progressive' thought as the Contrat social, the Système de la Nature and the Rights of Man were wellknown to the better-educated workers though ignored higher up the social scale. So in terms of their intellectual tastes too, the lower classes were more "progressive" than their supposed superiors.

To Engels this was highly significant. Intellectual decadence among the ruling classes and a love of enlightenment among the oppressed were features of every revolutionary epoch, he asserted, but these portents of a great social revolution had never been "so clearly expressed and so sharply delineated as now in England".⁴² He was still convinced England was on the verge of a tremendous upheaval. As we have seen, he believed that mass support for Chartism was snowballing rapidly among agricultural as well as urban workers, and that socialism too was marching forward. But whereas in his Rheinische Zeitung articles he had predicted that an economic catastrophe would spark the revolution and had

41. Ibid, WERKE, 1, pp. 475-476; MECW, 3, p. 387.

42. Ibid, WERKE, 1, p. 469; MECW, 3, p. 380.

decried the Chartist campaign for suffrage as a tactical error, he now seemed to place his hopes on the success of O'Connor's movement. The English revolution would, it appeared, take a political form after all, although Engels still had his doubts about the English parliament granting universal suffrage unless forced to by a working-class insurrection. If such an insurrection materialised he suspected the Irish would play a major role. Daniel O'Connell he dismissed as a careerist, but his supporters were a force to be reckoned with: "Two hundred thousand men -- and what men! People who have nothing to lose, two-thirds of whom are clothed in rags, genuine proletarians and sans-culottes and, moreover, Irishmen, wild, headstrong, fanatical Gaels". Led by a better man than O'Connell, asserted Engels, these Irish rebels alone would suffice to light the powder-keg. "Give me two hundred thousand Irishmen", he exclaimed, "and I will overthrow the entire British monarchy".⁴³ Despite his greater awareness of economics and social conditions in industrial towns, Engels was, it seems, like Marx, more interested in a political revolution to establish republican democracy than a social revolution to abolish the capitalist economic system. Although he was already intrigued by socialist theory, Owen's economic analysis of the evils of industrial capitalism had not as yet made any deep imprint on his mind. Chartism temporarily had a greater appeal to him than Owenism.

43. Ibid, WERKE, 1, p. 478; MECW, 3, p. 389.

While Engels was in England following the fortunes of the Chartist movement, Moses Hess remained in Paris observing the growth of French socialism. The death of the Rheinische Zeitung in March 1843 left him without a job, but in April he established himself as the French correspondent of the Schweizerischer Republikaner, the same paper to which Engels was sending reports on the condition of England. Running out of money in May, Hess returned reluctantly to Cologne where he made friends with Arnold Ruge and polished up three articles for Herwegh's collection, Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz.⁴⁴ Both sets of articles were concerned mainly with French socialism and Weitling's communism, and those in the Schweizerischer Republikaner were read by Engels (in Manchester) and Marx (in the Rhineland) during the summer of 1843. In this way Hess helped to stimulate both men's interest in French socialism, and thereby influenced considerably the evolution of their opinions. For this reason, it will be useful to take a quick look at Hess' evaluation of French socialist and communist thought as expressed in the Schweizerischer Republikaner and Einundzwanzig Bogen.

Hess was acquainted with the variety of socialist groups and theories which existed in Paris in the early 1840s, and was concerned in the Schweizerischer Republikaner articles

44. Moses Hess, "Sozialismus und Kommunismus", "Philosophie der Tat", "Die eine und ganze Freiheit", in Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz (ed. G. Herwegh), op. cit.

to contrast and evaluate their positions. The three main types of French socialism, he suggested, were Saint-Simonianism, Fourierism, and communism. Although previously he had been attracted to the Saint-Simonians, he now disregarded the movement (which had largely disintegrated after a major schism) and concentrated on the Fourierists and the group led by Etienne Cabet. Which looked the more promising? Hess suggested Cabet's 'utopian' communism. It was important, he argued, to assess not only the intellectual quality of a socialist theory but also its practical implications for the labour movement. Despite his sympathy for Fourier's vision of a truly liberated society, he believed that Fourierism was weak when it came to prescribing the practical means of achieving this utopia. Fourier, he thought, had revealed an unworldly naivety in appealing to the generosity of the ruling classes as the source of the capital required for his 'phalansteries'. Cabet, on the other hand, by addressing himself directly to the proletariat, was contributing to the gradual spread, among artisans and factory workers, of an awareness of their situation. Hess seems to have been convinced that 'utopian' communism in France was more than a theory propounded by a few intellectuals; it was, he implied, the ideology of a mass movement of workers themselves. As an ideology he was not satisfied with it -- it lacked a

sophisticated philosophy, but this defect, he suggested, could be mended by combining it with Bauer's Young Hegelianism. On another occasion, he proposed a blend of Weitling's egalitarian communism (which he apparently saw as essentially similar to Cabet's) and Feuerbach's humanism: the blend would make Feuerbach's abstractions more concrete and practical, while rooting communism in a 'scientific' view of human nature. He was dissatisfied with 'utopian' communism for two other reasons also. Fourier had been right, he argued, to see the flowering of the individual personality as the ultimate goal of the new social order, and so there was an emphasis on personal liberty in Fourierism which communism wrongly tended to neglect. Moreover, Fourier's attitude to work was more profound. Unlike Weitling, who assumed that labour would always be a painful if unavoidable obligation, the Fourierists aimed at transforming it into a free and joyous means of personal fulfilment. So, notwithstanding his critical remarks about Fourierist tactics, what Hess was really after was a synthesis of what he saw as the best ideas in both Cabet's communism and Fourierism. Such a synthesis, he urged, would be perfectly compatible with Young Hegelianism.⁴⁵

In three articles in Einundzwanzig Bogen (entitled "Philosophie der Tat", "Sozialismus und Kommunismus", and

45. Moses Hess, articles in Schweizerischer Republikaner, april-july 1843; Sozialistische Aufsätze (ed. Zlocisti), esp. pp.108-109.

"Die eine und ganze Freiheit"), Hess tried to carry out his programme of constructing a new socialist theory based on the ideas of Fourier, Cabet, Bruno Bauer, Feuerbach and Weitling. There was one important additional influence on his thought: Proudhon's critique of private property in Qu'est-ce que la propriété? He probably met Proudhon in person before leaving Paris; at any rate he seems to have been convinced during the spring of 1843 that Proudhon had to some degree anticipated him in combining the best of communism and Fourierist libertarianism, and, following Proudhon, he now christened his theory 'anarchism'.⁴⁶ His articles were aimed at a German audience sympathetic to Young Hegelianism. Reiterating the conclusion that several leading figures in the Young Hegelian movement had already articulated, he stressed the need for 'critical' philosophy to descend from the realm of ideas and do something practical to renovate European society. A new 'philosophy of action' was required, he claimed, and political journalism was not enough. His basic argument was that it was necessary to transform not merely the state but society as a whole, and consequently Young Hegelianism had to broaden its horizons from political radicalism to a new concern with 'the social problem'. How could post-Hegelian philosophy be applied to practical questions like poverty, unemployment, and factory

46. Hess, "Philosophie der Tat", loc. cit.

labour? He set out to answer this by showing, firstly, that emancipation from religious dogmas and the achievement of political liberty fell far short of fully liberating the human personality, and secondly, that an 'anarchist' society promised genuine liberation from the repressive social bonds which he believed currently held the majority of working people enchained.⁴⁷

Hess' reasoning was strongly influenced by Fourier and Proudhon. This was particularly evident in his article "Sozialismus und Kommunismus", a review-essay inspired by Lorenz von Stein's Der Socialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs. Although he had some kind words for the author's pioneering labours as a collector of factual information about French socialisms, he considered that von Stein, as a 'middle-of-the-road Hegelian', possessed no real understanding of the aims and argument of the French left. He had failed to comprehend that freedom entailed the total liberty of the individual in the realms of religion, politics and social life, and that true equality must be premised on total liberty. 'Anarchy' was the label that Hess, following Proudhon, gave to this ideal of total liberty combined with total equality; it could only be arrived at, he emphasised, by destroying the state and abolishing private property, because only then would oppression end and labour become voluntary and enjoyable.

47. Ibid.

Hess was confident that his goal of an anarchist community was no utopian dream. He believed that he could demonstrate it was the logical outcome of the path which human history had been following since the late eighteenth century. His 'demonstration' took the form of an account, in the tradition of Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history, of how the course of history was a 'march towards freedom'. The French Revolution, he suggested, had made a good start to the process of emancipation, but the kind of society it had created was still very imperfect: egoism was rampant, and so the tyranny of individualism had merely replaced that of monarchism. In his opinion -- (and here the influence of German Romanticism on his Young Hegelianism was apparent) -- this egoistic individualism, although a characteristic feature of modern life, was at odds with man's 'true' nature, which was essentially altruistic and co-operative, in a word, social. The unfortunate result was that modern man was constantly torn between two incompatible modes of behaviour: the ruthless self-assertion of his personal interests which was required by his need to survive in a highly competitive society, and his innate desire for friendship, co-operation, and a sense of community with his fellow human beings. Modern man was thus rent by a 'dualism' in his very nature, and Hess considered that no further progress towards freedom could be made until this split personality was healed.⁴⁸

48. Hess, "Sozialismus and Kommunismus", loc. cit.

Granted the validity of Hess' claim that the patterns of social behaviour imposed by modern civilisation were, in a fundamental way, at odds with 'true' human nature, it was easy to see why he viewed religious tolerance and political democracy as 'illusory' freedoms: 'real' freedom, on his premisses, would only be possible when the tension between what man really was and what society forced him to be had been overcome. The principal task of social reconstruction, he argued, was to devise a community in which this 'dualism' in the human character would be harmoniously resolved. His answer was to combine the virtues of Fourier's phalansteries and Proudhon's stateless federation of decentralised communes. The crux of the matter, he asserted, was to detect and abolish those things which were perverting human nature. He pointed to three: religion, the state, and private property. All these, he claimed, stunted human creativity or hampered co-operation. If they were removed, then the anguish of modern man's fragmented personality would be soothed, and he would be released from the relentless pressure to compete against his fellow-men. This being so, he concluded, there would no longer be a fundamental antagonism between the individual's private interests and those of the community as a whole, and there would be no need for institutions, like the police and the judiciary, designed to curb individual self-development. The truth of the matter was that the modern state was a repressive mechanism created to hold in check by force the

aggressive, anti-social behaviour instilled by modern commerce and industry founded on private property. The state and capitalism were inextricably linked: they would have to be destroyed together.⁴⁹

Hess believed that some progress towards 'anarchy' had been made since the French Revolution, but as yet only in the realm of ideas. Fichte's atheism and Babeuf's communism were two steps forward, although both men's achievements were negative: they merely pointed out the inadequacy of religious orthodoxy and the political status quo without offering much that was constructive. Saint-Simon, Fourier and Hegel had each made valuable contributions too, developing the theory of freedom and applying it to social questions, but in each case their work was vitiated by a strong conservative strain which had to be excised. Proudhon had made a preliminary synthesis of atheism, libertarianism and the egalitarian communism of Babeuf and Cabet, refining the existing critiques of the state and private property. So on the level of theory most of the elements of a comprehensive assault on the dominant illusions of contemporary society had been assembled. What was still needed was a theorist who could bring them together into a systematic social philosophy, drawing on German post-Hegelian philosophy as well as French socialism. Hess fancied this was the task he might fulfil. He called the nascent social theory a new 'philosophy

49. Ibid.

of action' and considered that as soon as it had been worked out in full the Young Hegelian movement should undertake a whole-hearted campaign to educate the workers in its principles.⁵⁰

Like that of Proudhon, Hess' solution to the 'social problem' was essentially an ethical one. He elaborated in abstract terms what features a 'just' society should possess in order to be fully in accord with the best in human nature, and assumed that two things had to be done in order to transform this vision of a new moral order into reality: educate the working class to espouse the anarchist ideal, and destroy the existing ideologies and institutions which formed a barrier to its establishment. There was, at this time, no economic dimension to Hess' socialism, nor was it rooted in any kind of concrete analysis of social forces in French, German or English society. It was, indeed, a paradigm of what Marx and Engels were later to dismiss scornfully as 'utopianism'. But it did incorporate some key ideas and insights of the more important French socialist theorists, Cabet, Fourier and Proudhon in particular, thus providing Hess' readers (who were to include Marx and Engels when Einundzwanzig Bogen was eventually published in October 1843) with a handy 'bridge' between Young Hegelianism and French socialism. Most significant of all was Hess' claim that the

50. Hess, "Philosophie der Tat" & "Sozialismus und Kommunismus", loc. cit.

deepest roots of the malaise afflicting contemporary European society were the oppressive institutions of the state and private property, and that only a profound social transformation would cure the 'dehumanisation' caused by this oppression.

Hess had posed some fundamental problems. Were political reforms essentially irrelevant to the issue of human freedom if they stopped short of dismantling the state? Was the institution of private property a fundamental obstacle to further progress towards a just and egalitarian society? How far-reaching would a revolution have to be if it was to have any real success in curing the sickness of modern man? Sooner or later Marx and Engels would have to come to terms with these questions.

While Hess was sketching his proposed synthesis of post-Hegelian philosophy and French anarchism, Marx had returned to the Rhineland from Holland, married his fiancée Jenny von Westphalen, and settled down in his father-in-law's residence at Kreuznach for a summer of study. He had now three grand intellectual projects. One was to re-evaluate Hegel, and set down on paper his criticisms of Hegel's philosophy of law and the state. This he did in a manuscript essay entitled Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law which extended the attacks on the Prussian regime which he had made in his Rheinische Zeitung articles to a work on the writer he now took to be the arch-ideologue of that regime. His manuscript took the form of a detailed

commentary on part of Hegel's Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts. It was frequently obscure and repetitive, a series of remarks about and musings on Hegel's text rather than a worked-out argument, but it reveals that he had begun to rethink his political philosophy radically. In particular, he was concerned to revise his attitude to the state, sketch his ideas on constitutional questions, and define his position on private property.⁵¹

His second study project at Kreuznach was the one on which he spent most time: reading extensively in European, and especially French, history. He read nearly two dozen historical works, over a third of which were about France, while others covered English, German, Venetian, Swedish and North American history. As far as France was concerned, he was most interested in the French Revolution, the Restoration Monarchy, and the Revolution of 1830. The authors he read included Chateaubriand, Ranke and Thomas Hamilton.⁵²

Marx's third line of inquiry was political theory. He worked carefully through two classics of the French Enlightenment: Rousseau's Du contrat social and Montesquieu's De l'esprit des lois, and took a look at Machiavelli's

51. "Aus der Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie" ("Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law"), MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 401-553; MECW, 3, pp. 3-129.

52. "Kreuznacher Exzerpte, 1843", MEGA I, 1(2), pp. 118-138. Not included in MECW.

Commentaries on Livy. But the books on political theory which intrigued him the most were those by French socialists which he had borrowed from Hess the previous winter but put off reading thoroughly at the time because of the pressure of work as a newspaper editor. He now went through Proudhon's Qu'est-ce que la propriété? again, Cabet's Voyage en Icarie, and probably Considerant's Destinée sociale, the first two volumes of which had been published and provided the most lucid and coherent introduction to Fourierism then available. He also took the chance to catch up on the writings of the Young Hegelian friends in Swiss publications like Ruge's Anekdoten, which contained Feuerbach's "Vorläufige Thesen zur Reformation der Philosophie", and the Schweizerischer Republikaner, which included Engels' articles on England and Hess' on French socialism.⁵³

Several themes recurred in Marx's jottings on Hegel's political theory. One was a repudiation, from an empiricist standpoint, of Hegel's speculative approach to law, politics, and history. Utilising the technique of 'transformative criticism' proposed by Feuerbach in his "Vorläufige Thesen", he attacked Hegel's theory of the state as a verbal "mystification" in which, by a logical sleight of hand, Hegel had at

53. Ibid. Marx's notes on these French socialist authors, if he made any, have been lost, but the fact that he looked at these works can be deduced from his letter to Ruge, written at Kreuznach in September 1843, included in "Ein Briefwechsel von 1843", Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 572-575; MECW, 3, pp. 141-145.

first glance "demonstrated the irrational to be absolutely rational". What Hegel had tried to do, he decided, was to prove that the modern (Prussian) state was a logical development from and complement to contemporary social institutions like the family. In his judgement this attempt had failed dismally: Hegel's supposed "logical development" was a "sheer pretence" based on an artificial distinction between 'civil society' and the state, and bolstered by a teleological view of history which was a-prioristic, schematic and unwarranted. He still thought Hegel's intentions were honourable -- the Hegelian theory of history was designed to vindicate 'freedom' -- but, unfortunately, it had ended up in practice as an apologetic rationalisation for the non-democratic nature of the modern state. The "organic unity" which Hegel had ostensibly shown to exist in constitutional monarchies like France and Prussia was as much an illusion as the logical pattern he had imposed on the course of modern history. In short, in Marx's opinion Hegel's conclusions were fallacious, and his speculative methodology shoddy.⁵⁴

He joined to this repudiation of Hegel's apologia his own analysis of the modern state's more reprehensible features. Repeating in the main the ideas in his Rheinische Zeitung articles, he criticised the power of government bureaucracies, the powerlessness of elected representatives

54. "Aus der Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie", loc. cit., MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 439-448; MECW, 3, pp. 33-40.

in a constitutional monarchy, and the disproportionate political influence wielded by wealthy property owners. He also stressed the unsatisfactory situation of the individual citizen. The ordinary man, he argued, was isolated from public affairs and his life was regulated by laws decreed by an alien power over which he had little or no control. He was therefore a non-political being with no sense of personal involvement in a democratic community. Moreover, if he was poor, he was not only deprived of political rights but his very status as a human being was denied. Marx concluded that there were two main problems with the modern state: its unrepresentative character, and the separation of politics from social life. Both these faults had to be removed if government and the law were genuinely to reflect public opinion and the state were to be founded on the democratic principle of popular sovereignty.⁵⁵

Though he found the realities of contemporary political life unsavoury and Hegel's model state a delusion, Marx was still convinced that modern government could be reconstructed satisfactorily. Faithful to the Young Hegelian method of criticising the status quo in the light of liberal ideals, he contrasted the Prussian regime with a "genuine state" based on representative democracy and universal suffrage. A parliamentary government of this type, he

55. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 494-499; MECW, 3, pp. 77-81.

claimed, would ensure that laws and policies reflected "public consciousness", and a decentralisation of administrative power would make for mass involvement in the day-to-day details of public affairs. He believed that in order to overcome the divorce between 'the state' and 'the people', "intermediary communities" should be recreated, by which he presumably meant that a considerable degree of power had to be placed in the hands of elected regional and local councils. This, he seems to have felt, would -- when added to electoral reform on the national level -- ensure that every commune (village, small town, or section of a city) would possess the vital sense of running its own affairs. Ordinary men, working together in relatively small social groups, would at long last have control over their own lives, and -- what was equally important -- be fully conscious of this freedom. Universal suffrage, he was convinced, was the key to solving the 'alienation' of the average citizen from politics and the state: it would bridge the present chasm between social life and public affairs (or, to put it in the Hegelian language which he still employed, between 'civil society' and 'the political state').⁵⁶

Most of Marx's ideas in this manuscript critique of Hegel were the product of his own reflections on his experience as a political journalist and his acceptance of the

56. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 541-544; MECW, 3, pp. 118-121.

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principle of popular sovereignty which he had found in Rousseau's Du contrat social. In the main, his attack on Hegelian conservatism was launched from the standpoint of a modified Rousseauian democratic liberalism. But there was one important aspect to his critique which derived not so much from Rousseau as from his reading of French socialists, in particular Proudhon. This was his claim that private property was inimical to "true democracy", a claim which marked his first substantial step on the path towards socialism.

Apart from Proudhon's mémoire, another work which Marx read at Kreuznach led him to raise the issue of private property as highly relevant to the question of what constituted the best kind of political regime. This was Hamilton's Men and Manners in North America, which he studied for information about the workings of republican democracy in the north-eastern states. On the basis of Hamilton's account he concluded that a distinction had to be made between the real nature of a regime and the constitutional form in which this might be hidden. The North American Republic, he asserted, was republican and democratic in form but not genuinely democratic in fact, because of the overwhelming influence in politics of men of property. In this respect, he considered, North America was no better than Prussia, because in each case the 'political state' existed to serve the interests of property-owners.⁵⁷

57. "Kreuznacher Exzerpte, 1843", MEGA I, 1 (2), p. 135.

Marx's opposition to private property was on ethical grounds. The consequence of the de facto alliance of bureaucrats and land-owners monopolising political power, he argued, was that in modern society a citizen had to possess property in order to possess political rights and in order to exercise any kind of choice concerning his future. The propertyless masses, disenfranchised, were denied this freedom of choice; hence, he concluded, private property, since it effectively denied people control over their own lives, was fundamentally immoral. Moreover, he suggested (following Proudhon), there was no way in which private property could be defended as a natural right: it merely existed as a contingent fact, lacking any ethical justification. Indeed, now that he came to question it, he was puzzled to explain the historic purpose behind the institution at all. "The true basis of private property, possession," he commented in tones reminiscent of Qu'est-ce que la propriété?, "is a fact and an inexplicable fact, not a right".⁵⁸

There was another way, too, in which Marx's reflections on Hegel were influenced by his first concerted study of French socialist literature. Proudhon and Considerant made him wonder, although only momentarily, about the adequacy of his ideal of a democratic state. He noted that several French writers had recently suggested that "in true democracy

58. "Aus der Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie", MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 531; MECW, 3, p. 110.

the political state is annihilated".⁵⁹ He did not yet take this French anti-étatisme seriously. The idea of abolishing the state, he commented, was correct only "insofar as the political state, as constitution, no longer passes for the whole" -- an obscure remark which apparently alluded to his belief that a parliamentary republic (based on universal suffrage and supplemented with democratic local government) would do away with a state apparatus monopolising political life. Unlike Hess, who had met Proudhon in person and who also knew much more about Saint-Simonianism, he was in no way attracted to anarchism or inclined as yet to foresee the complete disappearance of governmental administrative machinery. He simply wanted the control of this machinery to be widely dispersed throughout the population.⁶⁰

These, then, were the most interesting themes to emerge from Marx's confrontation with Hegel's political theory. The exercise largely emancipated Marx from the influence of Hegel's philosophy of law, and marked the end of the Young Hegelian phase in his mental development. It would be stretching the evidence too far to contend that Marx worked out, in this manuscript, a new political philosophy of his own, especially as his line of thought was so heavily dependent on Rousseau. However, reading between the lines, one can detect

59. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 435; MECW, 3, p. 30.

60. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 435 & 543-544; MECW, 3, pp. 30 & 120-121.

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a fairly coherent political theory forming in his mind. The following is a brief attempt to reconstruct the main argument.

Marx, as we have seen earlier, was particularly interested in the problem of the relations between the individual citizen, the state, and the society as a whole. He was also committed to the ideal that a society should not be a fragmented collection of individuals pursuing their own selfish interests but rather a community which somehow would harmonise these individual strivings. He found the same ideal in both Hegel and Rousseau, which was the main reason he paid so much attention to them. He was initially sympathetic to Hegel, and even to the Prussian state, because Hegel's ideal state (which, according to Hegel, but not the Young Hegelians, the Prussian regime came close to realising in practice), was a rational, free, ethical, law-governed and orderly community. Contrasting this ideal with the reality of Prussia, however, he concluded that the Prussian state in 1842-3 was in fact a Christian, semi-autocratic constitutional monarchy run by a powerful bureaucracy receptive to the pressure of vested interests, especially large landowners and wealthy businessmen. Neither its bureaucracy, Diets nor monarch lived up to Hegel's conception of them. In some ways it resembled a feudal regime because it claimed to be co-extensive with society. The difference was that whereas a genuine feudal state was a community, albeit an unfree one, the Prussian society, torn apart by conflicts between different

social groups and thoroughly inegalitarian over property and political rights, was neither a community nor free. The individual citizens and the state were divorced from each other and mutually antagonistic.

After reading Rousseau, Marx concluded that this state of affairs was characteristic not just of Prussia but of European and North American society in general. The key problem of political theory and practice, he decided (following Rousseau), was the antipathy between 'civil society' (in which man operated as an egoistic individual) and the ideal of a free, harmonious, democratic political community (in which man would act as a citizen, subordinating his private interests to the good of the community as a whole and co-operating with his fellow-men on the basis of equality). The task to be solved, he reasoned, was how to create a modern, non-feudal, rational political community in which the tension between man as a self-seeking individual and man as a good citizen would be overcome. Obviously, the new community must be democratic, secular, and republican, but unfortunately these formal constitutional criteria were, in themselves, insufficient. Gross inequalities and social problems could still exist in democratic republics as a result of the political power inherent in private property. So before the state could be transformed into a free, democratic community, both private property and the existing bureaucracy would have to be abolished, or at least drastically curbed in their political influence.

Marx seems to have sympathised with Rousseau's ideal of direct democracy in a thoroughly decentralised society made up of self-governing communes, but, regarding this as impractical, he opted for representative democracy based on universal suffrage. As before, his paradigm of the political/social community in which private and social interests harmonised was the Greek city state. His model of a "genuine state" or "true democracy" was the nearest he considered one could come to recreating this ancient kind of community in modern Europe. It offered the best chance, indeed the only chance, of curing the fragmentation and 'dehumanising' of the human personality which had been exacerbated by the bellum omnium contra omnes characteristic of modern society since the French Revolution. In a "true democracy" the individual would control his own future, develop the social side of his nature, and creatively unfold the hitherto repressed facets of his personality.⁶¹

While Marx was working on his critique of Hegel at Kreuznach in August 1843 he received a letter from his close friend Arnold Ruge, who had moved to Paris to investigate the feasibility of publishing a Young Hegelian journal there, out of reach of the Prussian censors. The plan, which Marx and Ruge had sketched tentatively the previous spring, was to create a successor to the Deutsche Jahrbücher, which would

61. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 435-436; MECW, 3, pp. 30-31; Also, "Kreuznach Exzerpte, 1843", MEGA I, 1 (2), p. 120.

solicit contributions from French democrats and socialists as well as Germans like Feuerbach and Bauer. Hopefully it would find a readership among the radical intelligentsia of both countries and promote an exchange of information and ideas between French and German 'progressives'. Marx and Ruge were to be joint editors, and Moses Hess (who went back to Paris with Ruge) would act as the chief contact between the journal's staff and its prospective French contributors. Ruge's letter to Marx reported on how preparations for the new publication, to be called the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, were progressing. He had begun seeking out French socialists to try to interest them in the venture. Like Marx, he had just started investigating contemporary French socialist literature and had been impressed most by the writings of Pierre Leroux and Proudhon. He had tried to track the two Frenchmen down in Paris, with partial success. Leroux was there, he informed Marx, but Proudhon had gone back to his home town, Besançon. Remembering that Marx had judged Proudhon the most important French socialist a few months before, Ruge knew he would be interested in hearing more about him. "Proudhon has produced a new fat book", he scribbled in his letter,

a formal system: Création de l'ordre dans l'humanité, ou Principes d'organisation politique. The systematic and categorical side is very weak, on the other hand he is radical even towards religion. He begins by denying religious truth, and calls all philosophy up to the present sophistry, which he contrasts with science. I haven't yet read very much; I would

say though that his praxis is better than his logic and his superstitious belief in an absolute systematology.⁶²

Marx replied to Ruge's letter in September. He was glad to hear that the publishing project was beginning to take shape, and was confident that it would be a success since it fulfilled a "real need" at a time when there was a widespread desire for political reform but a lack of agreement among reformers about practical details. No-one in the advanced liberal camp, he maintained, had an exact idea as to "what the future ought to be". This, however, was not the serious problem it might at first appear. The Young Hegelians were right not to "dogmatically anticipate the world" but rather to rely on "ruthless criticism of all that exists" as the sure means of establishing which features of the contemporary world were worth preserving as a foundation on which to build the new one. He was highly critical of all cut-and-dried remedies for contemporary problems, and ridiculed philosophers who claimed to have "the solution of all riddles lying in their writing-desks". In attacking a-priori dogmatism about political and social matters he clearly had in mind the Berlin Young Hegelian extremists whose articles he had blue-pencilled, but he was also thinking of the books he had just read by Weitling and French communists like Cabet and Dézamy. "I am not in favour of raising any dog-

62. Arnold Ruge to Marx, 11/8/43; MEGA I, 1 (2), pp. 313-314. Not in MECW.

matic banner", he declared. "On the contrary, we must help the dogmatists to clarify their propositions for themselves".⁶³

This disquisition on sectarianism led Marx to explain why he rejected communism as a "dogmatic abstraction". Cabet's and Weitling's proposals were much too extreme, he contended, because they had been formulated on the basis of one narrow idea: the repudiation of private property. Communism was, in fact, only one version of socialism, and, although founded on a broadly humanistic outlook, it was an expression of humanism which was "still infected by its anti-thesis -- the private system". In short, communism was one-sided and inadequate, which was why thinkers like Fourier and Proudhon had come up with less extreme but more comprehensive alternatives. Marx was thus much more sympathetic to the socialisms of Proudhon and Fourier than to the communism of Cabet, and he pointedly rejected "ready-made systems" like the Voyage en Icarie. He argued that one could support the abolition of private property without embracing communism, and affirmed his general acceptance of "the socialist principle" in the more moderate form given it by Proudhon.⁶⁴ But he was still no whole-hearted convert.

63. Marx to Ruge, September 1843, in "Ein Briefwechsel von 1843", loc. cit., MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 572-575; MECW, 3, pp. 141-145.

64. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 573-574; MECW, 3, p. 143.

Yet even in the form given it by the Fourierists and Proudhon, Marx informed Ruge, socialism was incomplete as a 'world-view'. "The whole socialist principle", he wrote, "is only one aspect that concerns the reality of the true human being." The socialists were right to point out that poverty, unemployment, poor wages and atrocious working conditions were by-products of a social system founded on private property. But they were wrong to think that these social problems were at the root of every sickness assailing the modern world. Material matters were certainly important, but the 'dehumanisation' of modern man had psychological and mental causes too which the socialists tended to neglect. It was equally necessary, he affirmed, to denounce the reigning 'orthodoxies' in religion, 'science', and politics. Indeed, these were the more immediate and pressing problems to be dealt with, and since the campaign against religious dogma was already well under way, the issue of political reform was next on the agenda. He therefore believed that the establishment of a democratic republic based on universal suffrage should have primacy over other problems.⁶⁵

Given this continuing commitment to parliamentary democracy, it is hardly surprising that Marx had no time for the viewpoint of "extreme socialists" who considered political questions "altogether unworthy of attention". He was, in the fall of 1843, still very far from sharing the

65. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 574: MECW, 3, p. 143.

anti-étatiste anarchism of Hess, Proudhon and some Fourier-ists. These ideas, he felt, were silly, impractical, and confined to a tiny minority, whereas there was potentially vast support for a campaign in favour of a representative system based on universal suffrage. In short, he was more interested in creating a mass movement for political reform than in worrying about the economic roots of the 'social problem'.⁶⁶

So even if Marx thought of himself as a 'socialist' in September 1843 after reading Proudhon and Considerant, his commitment to their perspective was at the most partial and lukewarm. Only their critique of private property had made a substantial impression on him so far, apart from his sympathy with their general humanitarian values. His last important piece of writing before arriving in Paris thus revealed a republican democrat who was still rejecting communism and affirming the primacy of reformist politics and intellectual criticism. It indicates that his Kreuznach readings and meditations were not in themselves decisive in the evolution of his views away from liberalism to a radical social philosophy.⁶⁷ Before he reached Paris Marx had

66. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 574; MECW, 3, p. 144.

67. On this rather important question I cannot accept the interpretation suggested by S. Avineri in The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1968, who claims that Marx was already a "communist" when he wrote "Aus der Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie" at Kreuznach in the summer
(cont'd)

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taken one important step towards communism, but he still had a long way to go.

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67. (cont'd) of 1843. Richard N. Hunt, in the best book on Marx's early political thought, The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels, I. Marxism and Totalitarian Democracy, 1818-1850, Pittsburg, U. of Pittsburg P., 1974, follows Avineri on this point. "Aus der Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie", however, is not the most lucid of documents and Marx's reasoning there is often tortured and ambiguous; the most it seems legitimate to draw from this manuscript is that Marx was by this time committed to a belief in popular sovereignty and universal suffrage, and he recognised that vested interests (like the state bureaucracy or wealthy property owners) could subvert the popular will even in a democratic republic. Since the term is so vague, these might be sufficient grounds for calling him a 'socialist', especially as he apparently became prepared to accept this label in September 1843. But his letter to Ruge, written just before he left Kreuznach and hence after "Aus der Kritik", clearly repudiates 'communism'. By 'communism' Marx at this time meant the views advanced by Cabet, Dézamy and Weitling (all of whom agreed that all property should be made communal and that private enterprise should be completely abolished). I am using the term in Marx's sense, and am assuming that mere hostility to large landed estates and big business enterprises run on capitalist lines (an aversion shared by almost all socialists) does not automatically make a writer a 'communist'. There was, incidentally, virtually no economic content to Marx's embryonic 'socialism' in the fall of 1843.

CHAPTER 4

MARX AND FRENCH SOCIALISM, FALL 1843-SPRING 1844

Marx's values were still Romantic and his politics radical republican when he and his bride joined Ruge and Hess in Paris in October 1843. He was looking forward eagerly to meeting the French socialists whose works he had perused at Kreuznach. In particular he hoped to see Pierre Leroux, the only one of these French theorists who had shown any interest in contemporary German philosophy. Just before leaving Germany he had begun dipping into Leroux's writings, and had been favourably impressed; writing to Ludwig Feuerbach to solicit a critique of Schelling for the projected Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, he commented that the French socialist philosopher was "gifted".¹ He also expected to meet Lamennais (whom Ruge thought would contribute to the Jahrbücher), Proudhon (who periodically visited Paris on business trips), the revolutionary communist Dézamy (an acquaintance of Hess'), the leading Fourierist spokesman Considerant, Louis Blanc (whom Ruge had already contacted), and possibly Cabet (for whom Hess had great admiration). As we have seen, Marx was most sympathetic, in the fall of 1843, to the more

1. Marx to Feuerbach, 3/10/43; MEGA I, 1 (2), pp. 316-317; MEGA, 3, pp. 349-351.

moderate of these thinkers, especially Leroux, Proudhon and Considerant, and still rather hostile to the "dogmatism" of communists like D  zamy and Cabet.²

The initial impact of French socialism on Marx after his arrival in Paris was indirect, through the medium of Moses Hess. Herwegh's collection, Einundzwanzig Bogen, had finally rolled off the press in October, and so he could now read Hess' articles advocating a synthesis of Young Hegelian philosophy and French social thought.³ He spent long winter evenings arguing with Hess about the latter's 'anarcho-communist' blend of the views of Cabet, Fourier and Proudhon, and his insistence on the need for a social rather than political revolution. Although Hess was a German, his philosophy was, apart from a certain debt to Weitling, mainly French in its sources. So Marx obtained, from Hess' articles and conversation, a foretaste of the menu he was soon to discover first-hand in the Parisian caf  s. Before reaching Paris he had not really been convinced of the immediate relevance of socialist ideals to his Young Hegelian political programme. Hess convinced him that French socialism was pertinent to day-to-day political problems and was much more than a body of interesting but extravagant speculations. French socialists, Marx now recognised, detected the same evils and problems

2. Marx to Ruge, September 1843, in "Ein Briefwechsel", loc. cit., MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 572-575; MECW, 3, pp. 141-145.

3. Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz (ed. Georg Herwegh), op. cit.

in European society as the Young Hegelians, and several French writers seemed to be looking for a similar solution: a new kind of just society where the isolation of the individual would be overcome.

The practical task which confronted him in Paris was that of converting Ruge's plans for a Franco-German review into reality. Ruge's efforts to gather French contributors had so far met with little success, and he soon fell sick, leaving the editorial work to Marx. Marx's first job, therefore, was to establish a firm list of contributors to the proposed journal. He issued invitations to stalwarts of the Schweizerischer Republikaner like Herwegh, Engels and Hess, to the poet Heine, whom he met in Paris and with whom he immediately struck up a friendship, and to the German philosopher whose work he admired at the time more than any other, Ludwig Feuerbach.⁴ Except in Feuerbach's case, he had few problems with his German contributors -- indeed, they provided more than enough material for the two volumes of the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher that were eventually published the next spring. The difficulty was with the French. Marx presumably called personally on as many left-wing French writers as he could locate in Paris, but unfortunately we have insufficient evidence to determine precisely whom he saw. Proudhon, who was out of town, he did not meet at this time,

4. Marx to Feuerbach, 3/10/43, loc. cit.

and it is doubtful that he saw Cabet, who was preoccupied with the development of Icarianism in Lyon and Toulouse and was probably therefore not in Paris. On the other hand, he certainly met Louis Blanc, who initially received him warmly, promised him an article, and gave him permission to use his house as a forwarding address for foreign correspondence.⁵ He also visited the offices of Démocratie pacifique, the Fourierist daily which had begun publication the previous August with Considerant's trenchant Manifeste de la Démocratie pacifique: Principes du socialisme; and since Considerant was himself in Paris engaged in editorial work for the paper Marx may have made his acquaintance. As we have seen, Marx had probably already read one of Considerant's earlier book-length accounts of Fourier's system; he now received from the pages of Démocratie pacifique a better idea of how some of Fourier's disciples hoped to implement their master's vision.⁶ As for Leroux, we cannot be sure that Marx saw him in person, but the circumstantial evidence makes it seem likely: Ruge had already contacted Leroux, who spent at least part of his time in Paris, Marx was anxious to meet him, and some two decades later (in the early days of the First International) Marx still regarded him with especial

5. Marx to Julius Frobél, 21/11/43; WERKE, 27, pp. 422-423; MECW, 3, pp. 351-353.

6. Karl Marx & Arnold Ruge, untitled letter to the editor, Démocratie pacifique, no. 133, 11/12/43, p. 3.; MECW, 3, p. 132.

respect and affection.⁷ Lamennais had already been contacted by Ruge, and Marx was unsympathetic to his religious outlook, so it is possible that he had neither the desire nor need to look him up -- at any rate, there is no evidence that he was influenced by Lamennais' brand of Christian socialism. D  zamy Marx may not have bothered with: he was hostile to D  zamy's crude egalitarianism and regarded him more as an agitator and pamphleteer than a social philosopher.⁸ From what can be deduced from the scanty evidence, then, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the first three French socialists Marx had discussions with in Paris were Louis Blanc, Pierre Leroux, and Victor Considerant. Together they exerted a significant influence on the way in which his thought evolved in these crucial months. Their influence was due in part to the fact that he happened to meet them (or read their writings) at a time when his ideas were in a state of flux and he was consciously searching for a new system of thought to replace his recently discarded Hegelianism. But it was not just a matter of chance. Marx already suspected that French socialism might be worth exploring further, and the men whose minds he first chose to

7. In June 1866 Marx nominated Leroux (then an exile in London) as a member of the Central Council of the International Workingmen's Association ('First International'): meeting of the Central Council of the I.W.A., 12/6/66, Minutes of the General Council of the I.W.A., vol 1 (1864-66), Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d. (1967), p. 199.

8. Marx to Ruge, September 1843, loc. cit. Marx retained this attitude to D  zamy and to Babouvian 'revolutionary communism' throughout his period of residence in Paris.

investigate each had an immediate appeal for him. In different ways their various philosophical and political positions were quite close to his own at the end of 1843. Politically, this was especially true of Louis Blanc, the first Frenchman to exert a direct influence on Marx in Paris.

Marx found in Blanc a left-wing journalist whose political strategy was akin to that which he himself had recently proposed to Ruge. Blanc was also a historian. He had recently published his Histoire des dix ans, 1830-1840, and had begun research for a major work on the French Revolution, the two-volume Histoire de la Révolution française, which was eventually published in 1847.⁹ This subject was one which particularly intrigued Marx, who had studied French history at Kreuznach and was now working his way through some volumes of Buchez' and Roux's huge compendium of parliamentary documents from the Revolution, the Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution française ou Journal des Assemblées Nationales.¹⁰ Marx's reactions to Blanc were mixed. He found him contemptuous of German philosophy, which he regarded as pernicious metaphysical speculation, and unsympathetic to militant atheism, which he thought a tactical political error, given the current strength of clericalism in France and Germany.

9. Louis Blanc, Histoire des dix ans, 1830-1840, Paris, Pagnerre, 1841; Histoire de la Révolution française (2 vols), Paris, Librairie de Figaro, 1847.

10. P.J.B. Buchez & P.C. Roux (eds.), Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution française, ou Journal des Assemblées Nationales, depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1815, Paris, Paulin, 1834-38.

There was therefore no meeting of minds between the two men on these topics, but Blanc was willing to impress his young visitor with his interpretation of the changing nature of the French Revolution, and to expound the central themes of his celebrated pamphlet, L'Organisation du travail.¹¹

Blanc probably influenced Marx in three main ways. He reinforced his democratic republicanism, impressing on him the vital difference between the 'Jacobin' social democracy of the recently created newspaper Le Réforme, and the elitist, laissez-faire liberalism of the 'Girondin' moderates on Le National.¹² From this time on Marx was convinced that democracy, to be genuine, had to have a social component, going beyond political formulae like 'representative government' and 'universal suffrage'. Secondly, Blanc provided him with a general scheme for understanding the significance of the French Revolution: he dated 1789 as a 'bourgeois' revolution sanctioning the emergence of a new individualist

11. Louis Blanc, L'Organisation du travail, Paris, Grasset, 1840; English trans., The Organisation of Work, Lincoln, University Press, 1911. Subsequent page references are to this English edition.

12. Blanc was a leading contributor to Le Réforme, and his interpretation of the view of the editors of Le National was biased by his hostility to this rival newspaper. He painted Le National as more sympathetic to laissez-faire liberalism than it was at this time, although one might argue that the statements and actions of the National in 1848 retrospectively justified his suspicions. In any case, for our purposes, the important point is that we have accepted Blanc's opinions as accurate, objective accounts, and became convinced that there was a crucial difference between the two wings of the French republican-socialist movement. That there were, in fact, substantial ideological differences between Le Réforme and Le National has been denied by Theodor Tschann, French Socialism, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 100. The truth, I suspect, lies somewhere between Blanc's and Tschann's positions.

and commercial society, and 1793 as an abortive attempt to heal the social wounds created by rampant laissez-faire. And third, Blanc deepened Marx's presentiment that contemporary Europe was going through a profound period of crisis from which some equally profound transformation of political and social life must needs emerge.

In L'Organisation du Travail Blanc offered a three-level analysis of the crisis he perceived in French society -- it was, he claimed, at once social, economic, and moral.¹³ That French society was disintegrating was, Blanc maintained, obvious to the casual observer: there were extremes of opulence and poverty, the lower classes barely eked out a miserable subsistence-level existence, the upper classes lived in continual fear of social disorder and lower-class violence, civil war was imminent, and that pillar of traditional social organisation, the family, was in demise. The beginning of this slide into decadence, thought Blanc, could be pinpointed with precision: the Revolution of 1789 had opened a floodgate, releasing a wave of social change which was rapidly destroying the old order. 1789 was for Blanc above all a bourgeois revolution: the political changes of 1789-92 allowed the French bourgeoisie to imitate their English counterparts and set France along the painful road of laissez-faire industrial capitalism, thus commencing a

13. L'Organisation du travail, op. cit. On Blanc, see Leo Loubère, Louis Blanc: His Life and His Contribution to the Rise of French Jacobin Socialism, Evanston, Northwestern U.P., 1961.

commercial duel with England which could only end with the ruin of one country. Since 1789, he admitted, several attempts had been made (in 1793, under the Empire, and in 1816), to slow or reverse this revolutionary process, but in vain; the transformation was "rooted in the depth of the social body", and 1830 had demonstrated that the reign of the bourgeoisie could not be prevented by the privileged orders of the ancien regime. But if the bourgeoisie remained in power, he added ominously, they would soon reduce France to the sorry state of modern Britain. He painted a dismal picture of industrial England, drawing on the writings of Sismondi to explain how laissez-faire capitalism had produced in England extreme inequality of incomes between classes, cycles of overproduction and unemployment, and a desperate drive to establish colonies as sources of the rapidly depleting raw materials incessantly devoured by mechanised industry.

Thus in Blanc's eyes the contemporary social crisis, while it had a political dimension, was rooted in economic change. Since 1789, he argued, the economic framework of French social life had become capitalist, or, to put it another way, France had become a commercial society in which all transactions were governed by the economic laws of competition in a free market. Undoubtedly the new economic regime had produced great wealth for the entrepreneurs but for the country as a whole it had been a disaster -- it had brought monopolies and high prices, machinism and declining wages,

overproduction crises, colonial conflicts, and, worst of all, a perpetual conflict between the interests of industry and agriculture. In short, France was undergoing a severe economic crisis which would have to be solved before there would be any hope of healing the wounds inflicted by 1789 and 1830 on French society.¹⁴ He pushed this analysis a stage further. Both the social and economic crises, he suggested, were ultimately manifestations of an even more fundamental trauma. The very values upon which traditional France had been built were being undermined. 1789 and 1830 symbolised the triumph of the philosophy of egoistic individualism cultivated by the philosophes and developed to its logical conclusion by the British political economists Ricardo and Malthus. The commercialisation of French social life meant that Frenchmen, in order to survive in a mercilessly competitive jungle, were being forced to defend ruthlessly their own particular interests at the expense of their neighbours. In spite of themselves, they were gradually adopting the values of the entrepreneur. It was not so much industry as commerce which Blanc abhorred: competition, he averred, bred misery and moral decadence, because it destroyed the natural harmony and co-operation which ought to exist between men and reduced them instead to the ethical level of wild beasts.

For Blanc, the liberalism of the revolutionaries of 1789 -- the liberalism of Enlightenment thinkers like

14. L'Organisation du travail, op. cit., passim.

Montesquieu and Smith -- was essentially an ideological justification of commercial capitalism. As such it was diametrically opposed to the social Jacobinism he detected in Robespierre and Babeuf and to the 'utopian' socialism of Morelly and Mably, whom he regarded as his intellectual mentors. He believed he shared with these precursors of his 'Jacobin socialism' a desire for a harmonious, egalitarian society based on co-operation. This society would be above all a community, a moral order in accord with natural law. Economically, it would exclude competition -- there would be a federation of producer co-operatives, initially state-created and state-run, later more independent but still regulated by central workshops controlling production in each branch of industry. His vision of an ideal society was thus opposed to Manchester liberalism on three vital counts: it favoured governmental paternalism, it repudiated free competition, and it abhorred egoistic individualism.¹⁵

Marx was thoroughly sympathetic to Blanc's analysis of the moral roots of the contemporary social crisis, and to his desire for a new social community based on fraternal co-operation. He was not put off by the implicit criticism of Blanc's proposals for government-controlled social ownership and a centrally planned economic system. His young socialism had left him sympathetic to a strong state, strong enough

15. *Ibid*; see especially pp. 100-101 (original text.).

that it was a democratic one based on popular sovereignty, representative government and universal suffrage. What did initially shake him was Blanc's hostility to liberalism.

Marx had started his political career as a liberal, edited a liberal newspaper for the Rhineland business community, and had always assumed that the main trouble with the Prussian state was that it was insufficiently liberal. Even at Kreuznach he had regarded himself as a liberal -- a left-wing liberal, a republican democrat, to be sure, but nonetheless still a liberal, who demanded, first and foremost, a political revolution to create a genuinely democratic society. Now Blanc -- and Hess -- forced him to recognise that the mere introduction of political democracy would not suffice to cure the sickness of modern society. The French Revolution had implemented liberal principles, and the result had been a society permeated with egoism, avarice and injustice. Reluctantly Marx had to admit that Blanc was right -- political democracy was no panacea, and the democratic revolution would have to be followed by a social revolution reconstituting life upon a different moral basis. In short, he came to perceive that his Romantic ideal of a harmonious moral community was at odds with his liberalism. As he had no intention of abandoning his most cherished values, he retained his Romantic vision and sought in French socialism rather than German liberalism the political (and later, the economic) means of realising them. His commitment to democracy remained a key part of his outlook, but

from this time on he saw democracy as a means to a greater end and no longer an end in itself. He now felt free to criticise the inadequacies and pernicious consequences of limited, 'bourgeois' democracy, without giving up his allegiance to the principle of popular sovereignty.

This second step of Marx's towards socialism -- his repudiation of liberalism and his recognition of the need for social as well as political transformation -- is evident in the first article he wrote in Paris: Part One of his Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher article, "On the Jewish Question".¹⁶ "On the Jewish Question" was actually two articles, not one; the two parts were written at different times and represent different stages in Marx's intellectual evolution. The first part may well have been begun at Kreuznach, but it must have been rewritten in Paris under the influence of Blanc and Hess, because Marx's thought even here had progressed beyond the position adopted in his letter to Ruge of the previous September. The article is too well known to require a lengthy description here, but it was obscurely written and has been often misunderstood, so a few comments may be apposite.

The title of "On the Jewish Question" was misleading. In the first part of the article Marx was concerned not merely with the problem of Jewish emancipation, (the subject of a

16. "Zur Judenfrage, I", Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, Paris, 1844; MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 576-599; MECW, 3, pp. 146-168.

book by Bruno Bauer which had sparked his train of thought), but with the wider issue of human emancipation -- what it entailed, and how it could be achieved. He posed the basic problem in much the same terms as had Schiller, Hölderlin, Feuerbach, Rousseau and many others before him: given that recent history had witnessed the disintegration of the human personality and an atomisation of human society, how could a "truly human" nature be re-established in which the individual would be no longer divorced from his true self and from his fellow-men. His terminology was derived from Feuerbach, but his answer was indebted to Hess and Blanc.

One of Marx's main themes in the article was that political liberation was not enough, and that only genuine social emancipation would permit the individual to become once again a "species-being", i.e., a free but integrated member of a democratic community akin to the ancient Greek polis. He was vague about what he meant by social emancipation, but he evidently desired the abolition of the contemporary society permeated with egoistic individualism. If his remedy was unclear, he at least made a more concerted effort to explain what was wrong with contemporary Europe. Here the influence of Blanc was evident: the main thrusts of Marx's critique were directed against the consequences of the French Revolution, and the values implicit in the revolutionaries' most forthright ideological manifesto, the Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen (1791, re-

vised 1793).¹⁷

The French Revolution, he maintained, was a bourgeois political revolution against feudalism. It successfully dissolved the feudal state and emancipated the bourgeoisie politically, but at the same time produced a serious split between socio-economic and political life. After the Revolution the French state was divorced from 'civil society', and educated Frenchmen simultaneously lived two separate lives: their political lives as citizens and their social lives as businessmen, artisans or members of the professions. The fragmentation of human nature thus appeared in France in terms of the split between man as homme and man as citoyen, a split which Marx claimed was reflected in the various versions of the Déclaration. He was not hostile to the Revolution; he emphasised the importance of political liberty as a necessary step towards human emancipation, and he accepted that political rights had been achieved in principle during the Revolution once a secular, republican democracy based on universal suffrage had been created. But he distinguished between the "droits du citoyen" which the Jacobins (following Rousseau) proclaimed at the most radical phase of the Revolution, and the "droits de l'homme" written into the 1793 Constitution and in his opinion implemented by the liberal revolutionaries. The "droits du citoyen", he maintained,

17. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 592-599; MECW, 3, pp. 160-168.

were premisses on popular sovereignty and had to be exercised in a community with other men, i.e., they were essentially social rights; although advocated by the Jacobins (and also in some democratic republican states in North America), they had so far been rendered illusory in practice by economic inequality. This demonstrated that even in republican democracies the lack of social emancipation rendered real political freedom impossible. Marx was wholeheartedly in favour of such "droits du citoyen"; "droits de l'homme", on the other hand, he scathingly denounced as "the rights of egoistic man, of man separated from other men and the community".¹⁸

He devoted considerable space in the article to a close analysis of what he considered the four main "droits de l'homme": l'égalité, la liberté, la sûreté, la propriété. These, he argued, were rights not of political man (the citizen), but of commercial man (the bourgeois operating in 'civil society'). Criticising the approach to liberty and equality taken by the authors of the Déclaration, he asserted that the "droits de l'homme" were premisses on a view of men as isolated monads, and sanctioned egoistic self-interest and anti-social behaviour. He also attacked the Déclaration's emphasis on security and property which, he claimed, made the state into a coercive instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The net effect of the Déclaration, he

18. Ibid, MEGA 1, 1 (1), p. 593; MECW, 3, p. 162.

concluded trenchantly, was to make "every man see in other men not the realisation of his own freedom but the barrier to it". For the bourgeois revolutionaries of 1789-93, he commented, the egoistic, entrepreneurial personality was a norm and an ideal, and the working model they had of society was the mechanical theory of the social contract. Against this 'atomistic' view of the individual and 'contractualist' view of society, he asserted that man was naturally gregarious and co-operative, a "species-being" who always operated best in a social context and fulfilled himself with the help of, and in harmony with, other people. In a word, for Marx the French Revolution had moulded man in the image of the bourgeoisie, and another revolution would be required to restore to man his "true", "natural", "social" nature. This revolution would be political, but it would have to be much more than merely political -- it would be a far-reaching social transformation because it was impossible for man to be fully emancipated within the existing "world order".¹⁹

This, though expressed in Feuerbachian language and strongly reminiscent of Rousseau in its desire to abolish the duality of man as homme and citoyen, was a socialist vision, presupposing egalitarianism and co-operation. Marx had abandoned liberalism and found a new ideological framework for his Romantic ideals. His socialism was, however, still

19. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 599; MECW, 3, p. 188.

extremely cloudy, and as yet completely lacking in any economic dimension.

Between writing the first part of the "Jewish Question" and the second, Marx became aware of the economic roots of the phenomenon of 'dehumanisation'. The second half of the article was a reply to another piece by Bauer on Jewish emancipation, this time an essay in Einundzwanzig Bogen. In it Marx adopted Blanc's position that the contemporary moral and social crisis was explicable only in terms of the spread of the capitalist ethic, which saw as the highest value the accumulation of money. Like Blanc, he came to see in the commercialisation of Europe the root cause of the fragmentation of modern social life and the 'self-alienation' of the individual.²⁰ By the time he came to pen this part of the "Jewish Question", however, Blanc was not the only socialist who had influenced the direction of his thought. In his first few months in Paris he developed a much closer relationship of personal friendship and intellectual partnership with Moses Hess than he had when editor of the Rheinische Zeitung. Thrown together by their joint involvement in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, Hess and Marx were evolving intellectually along similar lines, and discovered an exciting, if temporary, mental kinship. Hess told Marx as much as he knew about the different French socialist and

20. "Zur Judenfrage, II", Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, Paris, 1844; MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 599-606; MECW, 3, pp. 168-174.

communist theorists and sects, and the two men probably contacted Pierre Leroux and Victor Considerant, the two French socialists (apart from Proudhon) whom Marx most wanted to meet. There is a remarkable similarity between the ideas that Marx and Hess were committing to paper in the winter of 1843-44; in particular the central theme of Hess' draft essay "Über das Geldwesen" (written early in 1844 for the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher but omitted through lack of space from the only (double) volume ever published) and of the second part of Marx's "On the Jewish Question" was the same: an application of the Feuerbachian notion of religious alienation to 'money', seeing this as the new God of modern commercial society.²¹ We have no way of knowing for sure which man hit on this idea first; possibly it was a case of 'simultaneous discovery', possibly Hess was the innovator; but at any rate it appears most likely that the two men discussed the issue together before either took up a pen. The crucial question is not 'who thought of it first', but 'why did they both suddenly become interested in financial and economic questions'? The answer would seem to be the influence of Blanc, Leroux and Considerant.

Marx found in Leroux a thinker whose values and intellectual preoccupations were rather similar to those revealed by the manuscript critique of Hegel written at

21. Moses Hess, "Über das Geldwesen", Rheinische Jahrbücher zur Gesellschaftlichen Reform, 1845, vol 1, pp. 1-34; Sozialistische Aufsätze (ed. Zlocisti), pp. 158-187.

Kreuznach. He was, to start with, the only French socialist in these years to show any abiding interest in German Idealist philosophy. Although he probably had read little Hegel and had not followed in detail the evolution of the Young Hegelian movement, Leroux knew the work of Kant, Fichte and Schelling -- (he had recently written an article on the latter's celebrated reappearance at Berlin University in 1842) -- and was interested to hear more about current German philosophical controversies. He was himself a philosopher -- in 1839 he had published a substantial work, the Réfutation de l'éclecticisme, attacking Victor Cousin, whose highly influential system dominated French academic philosophy.²² This book of Leroux's was a leading manifesto of French Romanticism and has been called the philosophical equivalent of Hugo's literary weapon, Hernani, a description which reveals a second feature of Leroux's outlook that strongly appealed to Marx: his Romanticism. Leroux, in fact, had translated Goethe's Werther into French in 1829, and during the 1830s (after a brief spell in the Saint-Simonian movement) had made the Revue Encyclopédique (which he helped edit) one of the champions of French Romantic art and literary theory, writing numerous articles explaining and defending the works of Goethe, Byron, Chateaubriand, Senancourt

22. Pierre Leroux, Réfutation de l'éclecticisme, Paris, Gosselin, 1839.

and Sainte-Beuve (among others).²³

Another thing Marx and Leroux found they had in common was their interest in recent biblical scholarship, and their concern to define (and expose) the social role of the Christian religion. Leroux was more sympathetic to religion than Marx, but he was equally hostile to established versions of contemporary Christianity, like Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism, which he characterised as "empty shells". He had devoted much time to an elaborate study of the rise and decline of the Christian Church, and had concluded that by the eighteenth century the Christian religion (which the Reformation had ultimately failed to regenerate) had lost its battle against the massed forces of rationalism, science and secularisation. Like Marx, Leroux was fascinated by the consequences for modern man of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, the twin forces of modernization which together had undermined and destroyed the feudal/Christian world. His attitude to the Enlightenment was, like Marx's, ambivalent. Much of the philosophes' work was destructive, he argued; they were responsible for articulating the modern ideology of utilitarian liberalism which justified the irresponsible egoistic individualism of the middle classes,

23. On Leroux, see Jack S. Bakunin, Pierre Leroux and the Birth of Democratic Socialism, Doctoral Dissertation, City University of New York (Ann Arbor, University Microfilms), 1973, and David O. Evans, Le socialisme romantique: Pierre Leroux et ses contemporains, Paris, Riviere, 1948. The comparison between Leroux and Hugo was made by Evans, op. cit., p. 56.

concerned only to defend property, competition and their own material self-interest. In short, Leroux, like Blanc, blamed the Enlightenment for the dominant value-system which sanctioned the commercialisation of modern France, a process which he too loathed and feared. On the other hand, he detected in Rousseau's Contrat social, Condorcet's Esquisse, and the writings of the Enlightenment 'utopian' socialists the germs of a new philosophy, an alternative value-system appropriate to the new social order which he believed would eventually replace commercial capitalism, and singled out liberty, equality and human perfectibility as the key concepts of this new socialist ideology. In his own writings Leroux concentrated on the concept of equality, subjecting its evolution to historical analysis in one of his most important books, De l'égalité.²⁴ Ultimately, despite his critique of facile Enlightenment optimism, he believed firmly in the progress of the human race towards a more just, freer, and more egalitarian society. In this respect he was, notwithstanding his Romanticism, a child of the Enlightenment; indeed his fusion of Romantic and Enlightenment ideas and attitudes was remarkably similar to Marx's. Unlike his relations with Blanc, Marx probably sensed that in Leroux he had found an intellectual equal with whom a meeting of minds was possible.

24. Leroux, De l'égalité, Paris, 1838; nouv. ed., Boussac, Imp. de P. Leroux, 1948.

Politically, Leroux was a republican democrat who had, in the 1830s, played a significant role in the Société des droits de l'homme, and indeed had helped formulate its programme of 1833 which championed universal suffrage and social reform. After the failure of republican insurrections in Paris and Lyon in 1834, he had become disillusioned with conspiratorial politics and had drifted away from involvement in day-to-day political affairs, but his broad political allegiance had not changed. He now stressed the inadequacy of mere political change, arguing that the malaise afflicting French society could not be overcome until a new kind of organic community based on justice and equality was created. This perspective fitted perfectly with Marx's new convictions. He agreed with Leroux's dismissal of secret societies as childish and dangerous, sympathised with his Rousseauian ideal of a community based on popular sovereignty and the general will (in which the divorce between the individual and society would be overcome), and echoed his repeated appeal to the notions of 'solidarité' and 'communion' as the principles which would underlie the socialist society of the future.²⁵

His conversations with Leroux thus deepened and reinforced Marx's newly acquired socialism, strengthening his intuition that socialism, not liberalism, was the political

25. Ibid., passim. Also, Leroux, De l'humanité (2 vols), Paris, Perrotin, 1840.

movement which had correctly diagnosed the sickness of contemporary Europe and might cure it. Indeed Leroux offered Marx both a detailed and comprehensive critique of the ills of modern society and a positive programme for remedying them.

We have seen how Leroux's critical analysis of liberalism and Christianity harmonised with Marx's own. To this campaign against his intellectual opponents he joined a passionate moral denunciation of social injustice, attacking bourgeois privileges, political inequality, and poverty. Like Blanc in La Réforme (which Marx read at least occasionally), Leroux stressed the need for immediate social reforms to alleviate distress among the worst paid workers and the unemployed, and he argued repeatedly for educational schemes to combat ignorance and prejudice among the lower orders. Marx's exposure to the writings and conversation of these two Frenchmen no doubt gave him a firmer grasp of the realities of poverty, crime and disease in the slums of Paris, which Hess probably also took him to observe in person. But it is one thing to be aware of poverty, crime and unemployment, and another thing to understand the causes of them. Hess could give Marx no explanation, whereas Leroux could, or at least thought he could. Like Blanc he argued that the social crisis was attributable to an economic crisis, and that poverty and unemployment were inherent in the contemporary economic regime.

Leroux's economic analysis, though somewhat general

and abstract, went beyond Blanc's in focussing on industrialisation and on the growth of two new, antagonistic classes: a wealthy 'plutocracy' and a mass of wage-slaves. The relationship between these two groups, he suggested, was a kind of new 'feudalism', and class conflict was a necessary characteristic of the new industrial economy so long as it was run on capitalistic lines. Perhaps because of his Saint-Simonian heritage, Leroux does not seem to have been hostile to factory industry per se, but he criticised the Saint-Simonians for their faith in a managerial élite and for their view of the individual worker as merely a cog in an industrial machine. The answer to wage-slavery, he suggested, was essentially no different to the socialist remedy for political and social injustice: democracy and equality. This meant, in practice, workers' control of the factories and workshops in which they spent their lives. Leroux looked forward to the eventual creation of a democratic socialist society, but in the meantime he supported the embryonic co-operative movement and the press campaign of the republican left for political and social reform. Both his philosophical critique of contemporary society and his moderate, reformist programme were congenial to Marx at this time.²⁶

26. Leroux, De l'égalité, op. cit., and his articles in Revue indépendante between 1841 and 1843, especially "De la ploutocratie ou du gouvernement des riches", Revue indépendante, t. 4 (sept 1842), pp. 513-596 & t. 5 (oct 1842), pp. 5-74.

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Marx and Hess read La Réforme and Leroux's Revue indépendante during the winter of 1843-44, but they also perused the Fourierist daily edited by Victor Considerant, Démocratie pacifique. Marx even had a letter to the editor published in the paper in December 1843, announcing that he and Ruge had reason to hope that Lamartine and Lamennais would both contribute to the forthcoming Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher.²⁷ Almost certainly he approached Considerant for an article too. Whether or not he met the Fourierist leader personally, he undoubtedly read his newspaper, including the celebrated essay with which it commenced publication: the Principes du socialisme.²⁸ The influence of this manifesto on Marx was profound; even as late as 1847 he used it to some extent as a model for the Manifesto of the Communist Party, and many of the themes of that document found their first expression in Considerant's earlier pamphlet. Not that Marx assimilated Considerant's ideas all at one go; on the contrary it was not until some months later when he began to

27. Démocratie pacifique, no. 133, 11/12/43, p. 3.

28. Principes du socialisme: Manifeste de la Démocratie pacifique, Paris, Démocratie pacifique, 1843. This pamphlet was actually a reprint of the article which composed the first issue of the newspaper, entitled "Manifeste politique et social de la Démocratie pacifique", Démocratie pacifique, no. 1, 1/8/43. A revised version, retitled Principes du socialisme: Manifeste de la démocratie au XIX^e siècle, Paris, Librairie phalanstérienne, 1847, was published some months before Marx wrote his own manifesto for the Communist League and almost certainly influenced the composition of this famous work. By this time, however, Marx's views were fairly firm, whereas he probably read the initial version in Démocratie pacifique when most susceptible to the influence of Considerant.

read Fourier himself that he became really enthusiastic about Fourierism. But Marx and Hess did find in the pages of Démocratie pacifique much food for thought, and in particular a more detailed account of socialist economic thought than they had previously been exposed to.

Considerant's socialism had a positive side and a negative side -- the latter was his scathing critique of modern capitalist society, the former his package of remedies. Both derived directly from Fourier, although Considerant's analysis of the capitalist economy went beyond Fourier and appears to have been considerably indebted to Sismondi. It seems that Marx was initially more impressed by the critical side of Considerant's system than with his 'utopian' scheme for a counter-culture institutionalised in a network of 'phalansteries'.

As painted by Considerant, the operation of the French economy was thoroughly irrational and inhumane: it sucked thousands of men, women and children into workshops and factories and then periodically cast them out, jobless, to starve in the streets.²⁹ Unregulated capitalism had produced economic anarchy characterised by monopolies, high prices, huge profits, bankruptcies, unemployment, declining wages, and the pauperisation of the wage-earners. He pointed to the cycle of boom and slump which had become a feature of

29. Victor Considerant, Destinée sociale, 3 vols, Paris, Librairie du Palais-royal, 1834-44, vol 1, p. 26.

French economic life, and put forward an underconsumption theory of periodical sales crises to account for the fluctuations in price, wage and unemployment levels. Like Leroux, he emphasised the misery and bitterness caused among the lower classes by the new commercial and industrial regime; he too saw capitalism as a new kind of feudal dictatorship in which the workers were 'industrial serfs' whose only hope was to somehow break free from the exploitation to which their masters subjected them. Class conflict was rapidly becoming more severe, and there was a real danger of violent social revolution, he warned, even suggesting that the time was not far off when French society would be reduced to two warring classes: bourgeoisie and proletariat.

While he was as hostile as Blanc and Leroux to the acquisitive and competitive values of the entrepreneur, Considerant, (in this respect going beyond Fourier whose real hatred was for commerce), attacked machinism as one of the chief evils which had caused the present crisis. The new industrial technology, as employed by entrepreneurs in a market system, was responsible for the extremes of wealth and poverty so evident in contemporary France. The central idea underlying the industrial revolution, he argued, was to replace men by machines, but every invention which brought its owners fresh profits brought at the same time unemployment to the workers it replaced. He posed in Destinée sociale the simple question: what would happen when machines had come to dominate the production process? His answer was

that although machine-made goods would be cheap and abundant, there would be no domestic market for them because the hosts of technologically unemployed workers would be dying of hunger. The economy would then collapse in an over-production crisis of monstrous proportions.³⁰ Industrial capitalism was therefore an absurd, self-destructive system, and the economic chaos experienced in France in the 1830s was merely the beginning of a vast economic catastrophe. Before the crisis proceeded much further it would likely engender civil war and social revolution.

The cataclysm could only be avoided, Considerant preached, if France voluntarily undertook a programme of peaceful, gradual social change along the lines suggested by Charles Fourier. Phalansteries, he claimed, were the solution to the ills and evils wrought by unrestrained competition: co-operative communities designed to harmonise conflicting interests and remould the social environment to accord with human nature and allow man to develop all his capacities and fulfill all his desires. Fourier's (and Considerant's) aim was to create, in a phalanstery, a model society in miniature in which the full range of human passions would find outlets, in which work would become joyful, and in which men would have total freedom to cultivate their own personalities. The goal was, in short, total liberation

30. Ibid., pp. 150-151.

and total fulfilment; the method was to radically restructure human society to make it correspond for the first time ever to human nature (which Fourier regarded as unchanging).³¹

Considerant's vision was socialist in the sense that it stressed freedom and co-operation as the basic principles of the new society, but it was not egalitarian (and hence not communist) -- private property and private capital would continue to exist, and the members of the phalansteries would receive in return for their labour not equal pay but 'dividends' based on the capital and skill they had contributed as well as the number of hours worked. This feature of the system appealed to Marx at first -- as we have seen, he was initially suspicious of communism and, like Proudhon, insensed more by the abuse of private property than by the institution itself. As an erstwhile admirer of Condorcet he also found congenial Considerant's theory of progress: a division of the history of mankind into seven stages, the penultimate of which would be a socialist society composed of co-operative communities, and the last a utopia in which

31. Ibid, passim. Principes du socialisme, op. cit., passim. On Considerant, see Hubert Bourgin, Victor Considerant, son oeuvre, Paris, Imprimeries réunies, 1909; Maurice Dommanget, Victor Considerant, sa vie, son oeuvre, Paris, Editions sociales internationales, 1929; Rondel Van Davidson, Victor Considerant: Fourierist, Legislator and Humanitarian, Doctoral Dissertation, Texas Tech. Univ. (Ann Arbor, University Microfilms), 1970; George Kirchmann, Utopia and Reality: The Life and Social Theories of Victor Considerant, Doctoral Dissertation, City University of New York (Ann Arbor, University Microfilms), 1973.

full social harmony would be achieved. But these were details which Marx paid more attention to later when he had become partially converted to Fourierism; what struck him most forcefully in the winter of 1843-44 was Considerant's attack on the compulsive irrationality of the entrepreneur's lust for wealth, and its deleterious social consequences. Considerant, even more than Blanc and Leroux, stimulated in Marx an interest in the economic content of French socialist theory, and convinced him that the 'dehumanisation' of modern man had an economic as well as a moral and political aspect.

Apart from pointing out that Considerant's economic analysis was more sophisticated (or at least more detailed) than Leroux's, it is difficult to separate what Marx owed to each man. I suspect he assimilated Leroux's outlook more readily than Considerant's more sectarian ideology, but he derived from each Frenchman a general orientation towards social and economic problems and a new interest in the industrial worker. They both had a humanitarian, progressivist philosophy of history, and Marx probably borrowed from them the idea that the emancipation of the 'proletariat' was the next stage in the onward march of history and would make possible the creation of a social community based on fraternity, liberty and self-development, a community impossible under commercial capitalism. Leroux and Considerant, too, based their visions of the future socialist society on this Romantic notion of a community capable of overcoming the disintegration and oppression characteristic of center-

porary 'civilisation'. And, like Marx, they saw a democratic political system based on popular sovereignty as a necessary stage in reaching this goal, although they believed that institutional changes, to be effective, would have to be accompanied by a moral reformation. Ultimately, the writings of Blanc, Leroux and Considerant appealed to Marx because he was coming to share not only their belief in progress, liberty and self-cultivation (values he had retained from his early liberal Romanticism), but also their faith in co-operation and equality.

As remarked earlier, Moses Hess and Marx were travelling the same intellectual path in late 1843/early 1844. Hess, who had been fascinated by French socialism and communism for several years, had a head start, and during Marx's first few months in Paris adopted, to some extent, the role of teacher. Although a self-proclaimed 'anarcho-communist', he had previously neglected socialist economic theory, and his fusion of French socialism and Young Hegelianism had lacked an economic dimension. He and Marx therefore discovered the economic aspects of French socialism together. Yet Hess' greater knowledge of socialist theory placed him, in general, in a better position than Marx to internalise and quickly make use of Leroux's and Considerant's doctrines. So although we have no evidence that "Über das Geldwesen" was written before the second part of "On the Jewish Question", it may well be true that Hess showed Marx how Feuerbach's notion of 'self-alienation' applied to economic as

well as to religious life.³² Marx had for several years accepted Feuerbach's theory of religion, and recognised religious 'self-alienation' as one facet of the more comprehensive problem of 'dehumanisation', whereas Hess seems only to have become a Feuerbachian with the publication of the Vorläufige Thesen in 1843.³³ It was thus probably Hess, with the enthusiasm of a neophyte, who latched onto the term 'self-alienation' and used it in a looser way than Feuerbach to denote any and all forms of 'dehumanisation'. His example was catching, and for a while Marx also took over the term as a convenient portmanteau word to describe the sickness of

32. David McLellan, The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx, pp. 154-155, asserts that Marx plagiarised Hess' unpublished manuscript of the "Über das Geldwesen" article when writing his own contributions to the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher. But he fails to prove that Hess' essay was written first and that Marx copied it rather than vice versa, nor does he take into account the likelihood that the two friends discussed their ideas together before penning their respective pieces. His claim is therefore non-proven. This, however, is not to deny the importance of Hess' influence on Marx during these months, an influence which derived in large measure from the fact that Hess at this time knew more than Marx about the topics which fascinated them both, French socialism and 'the social question'.

33. Ludwig Feuerbach, "Vorläufige Thesen zur Reformation der Philosophie", in Arnold Ruge (ed), Anekdoten zur neuesten deutschen Philosophie und Publicistik, op. cit. Both Marx and Hess read the Anekdoten in the summer of 1843, and both were enthusiastic about Feuerbach's essay. Marx, however, had almost certainly read Das Wesen des Christenthums in 1841 when finishing off his Doctoral Dissertation, and so already had a good idea of Feuerbach's line of thought, whereas Hess had by that time already become interested in English social problems and French socialism and was therefore less preoccupied with the question of religion. Feuerbach's 'new' approach to philosophy may therefore have seemed more original to him than to Marx. For Hess' views before he read the "Vorläufige Thesen" see Die Europäische Triarchie, op. cit., passim.

modern society. He did so precisely at the moment he realised that this sickness had economic roots -- economic 'alienation' therefore appeared for the first time in his writings in the second part of "On the Jewish Question".

'Alienation', as used by both Marx and Hess, referred to both the fragmentation of modern man's personality and his isolation from his fellow beings. Hess had previously described this condition and prescribed a remedy, but he had failed to explain its causes in concrete terms. Now Leroux and Considerant, along with Feuerbach, gave him the clues he needed. Modern man, he repeated in "Über das Geldwesen", was selfish and egoistic, and had thus deviated from his true nature which was social. This 'alienation' of man from his true self found theoretical expression in religion and practical expression in commerce; both religion and commerce indicated in different ways that contemporary social organisation was 'unnatural', that men had lost their sense of identity and community. Hess was much more interested in the second, practical kind of 'alienation', which he saw symbolised in the entrepreneur's elevation of money-making into a supreme virtue. He quickly came to see religion as a mere manifestation of social dislocation, whereas the lust for personal wealth which oiled the wheels of the contemporary social system was, in his eyes, the thing that really perverted human beings. Human life, he maintained, was essentially a social activity in which individuals created food and other goods and then exchanged them. Hence men could not

live as totally isolated entities, they had to achieve some degree of mutual co-operation, and the more they achieved, the better (both materially and morally) their lives would become. Human history for Hess was the development of human production within a social framework, and life was essentially an "exchange of productive activity". This was why the economic bases of social life were so important -- social organisation was inextricably tied to some form of economic organisation, and if economic man was individualistic and competitive then social man would be so too. Given this link between economy and society, he concluded, economic 'alienation', (the turning of money into a god), was the source of the present moral and psychological crisis.³⁴

Marx argued the same thesis in the second half of "On the Jewish Question". Stressing that the problem of Jewish emancipation was not a religious but a social one, he merged it into a wider discussion of how Europe could overcome its pervasive moral and social crisis. The real barriers to emancipation, to the restoration of man's mental health, were "huckstering and money". Money, he asserted, had become an inhuman but tremendously powerful force dominating men's activities and forcing them to act selfishly to satisfy their "practical needs" at the expense of others. The lust for wealth was now running riot, and society had

34. Hess, "Über das Geldwesen", loc. cit., passim.

dissolved into a bourgeois world of "atomistic individuals" hostile to each other. When money was the highest value, he added, men were necessarily reduced to the level of commodities. Wage-labourers and women had become "alienable, vendible objects", forced to acquiesce in their new, degrading status by their urgent need for food and shelter and their situation as isolates in an unfriendly environment.³⁵

Abstract and rhetorical as Marx's essay was, it nonetheless conveyed unequivocally his disgust at the way contemporary capitalism left helpless individuals to fend for themselves in a cut-throat world where everything, including human life, could be bought and sold. In effect, he set up a series of virtually interchangeable concepts -- 'money', 'civil society', 'Judaism', 'huckstering', 'egoism', 'private property', 'atomistic individualism' -- and lambasted the lot. He was sometimes unclear whether the values he loathed were the cause or the result of commercial capitalism. Like Hess, Marx had come to view the prevalent moral crisis and the spread of capitalism as two sides of the same coin, but unlike Hess he had not yet firmly concluded that the economic aspect was the more fundamental. He was moving in that direction, though; and at one point in "On the Jewish Question" he asserted that money was the source of all evil.³⁶ In opposition to this money-dominated, hostile,

35. Marx, "Zur Judenfrage, II", loc. cit., MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 599-606; MECW, 3, pp. 168-174.

36. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 603; MECW, 3, p. 172.

bourgeois jungle-society, he held up once again his Romantic ideal of a genuine social community in which there would no longer exist any conflict between "man's individual-sensuous existence and his species-existence". Clearly, he concluded, in such a community there would be no place for money. He had realised that his ideal society was incompatible with the drive for profit at the heart of contemporary capitalism, and, like Blanc, he had now decided that commerce was the cancer which had to be excised.³⁷

If the impact of Blanc, Leroux and Considerant on Marx's thought can be detected in "On the Jewish Question", it was much more evident in the next essay he wrote for the Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher, "Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law".³⁸ He discussed six main issues in this article: the current role of Young Hegelian 'critical' philosophy, the real significance of the campaign against religion, the contribution of Germany to the recent progress of the human race, the difficulties in the way of a radical revolution in Germany, the new problems of modern industrial society in France and Britain, and the means whereby "universal emancipation" might come about.

Although much of the essay was devoted to the condition of Germany, Marx's focus of interest had clearly changed

37. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 606; MECW, 3, p. 174.

38. "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie. Einleitung.", MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 607-621; MECW, 3, pp. 175-187.

to France and England. In order to tackle "truly human problems", he argued, philosophical criticism would have to abandon Germany and deal with modern "politico-social reality" in France and Britain. Germany was backward politically -- pre-1789 on the French time-scale -- and so required both a 'bourgeois' political revolution to establish a republican democracy and a social revolution to cure the distress created by economic modernisation and social dislocation. The problem with Germany, Marx lamented, was that the liberal bourgeoisie, while intellectually progressive, was morally weak and timid in everyday politics. All revolutions required a "material basis", he remarked, and could only be successfully realised in practice if they corresponded to a people's real needs. He doubted whether the German middle-class was strong enough to pull off a successful liberal-democratic revolution on its own; it would need the support of the lower classes to have much chance of victory. But, he mused, since Germany was already suffering the hardships of modern economic development, a successful political revolution would likely spark off a social revolution too. Given the present situation in Germany, it was utopian to expect a "partial, merely political revolution"; it would have to be a "general human emancipation".³⁹

Now he had come to this conclusion, Marx had little time for Bauer and Feuerbach, who wanted to restrict the

39. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 615-619; MECW, 3, pp. 183-186.

Young Hegelian movement to a scholarly campaign against revealed religion. Religious criticism, he claimed, was a kind of indirect, disguised critique of social ills. By demonstrating that religion was both the "sign of the oppressed creature" and "the opium of the people", Feuerbach's theory of religious alienation was implicitly a demand that social abuses be reformed and people be given real instead of illusory happiness. Marx summed up his point in the epigram that the criticism of religion was in embryo "the criticism of the vale of tears", -- and thereafter concerned himself directly with the social problems of industrialising nations (the 'vale of tears').

The major issue of modern times, he announced, was "the relation of industry, of the wealth of the world generally, to the political world". European politics were in the process of becoming democratic, but control of the economy remained in the hands of an elite. Given the real distribution of power in society, the bourgeoisie was retaining the wealth generated by industrialisation, and the factory system as currently operated was creating a new class of paupers: "artificially impoverished...masses resulting from the drastic dissolution of society".⁴⁰ He had thus discerned two issues as crucial in the modern "politico-social reality" of France and Britain: (i) the relationship between economic

40. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 620; MECW, 3, pp. 186-187.

and political power, and (ii) the perverse distribution of wealth (and poverty). Following Leroux, he now believed that 'the social question' had to be solved at once, but that this could not be done without the abolition of private property and commerce. He also believed that liberty and equality would remain mirages unless economic life as well as politics were made democratic. In making the elimination of poverty, the abolition of commerce, and the democratisation of industry his goals, Marx was beginning to put some content into his previously nebulous notion of a 'social revolution'. Under the influence of French socialism he had thus developed his ideas considerably since his letter to Ruge the previous September.

Again drawing on French socialist theory, he tackled in the "Introduction" the question, (which he had ignored in "On the Jewish Question"), of how the social revolution might come about in different European countries. His broad answer was that it would be the work of a coalition of intellectuals (humanitarian philosophers like Leroux and the Young Hegelians), and the 'proletariat'. By itself, he admitted, philosophy was powerless to effect political or social change: "the weapon of criticism cannot replace criticism by weapons", he remarked, adding bluntly that "material force must be overthrown by material force". But he had faith in the power of socialism once it had become a mass ideology. Theory, he argued, would become a material force once it had gripped the mass of workers, and it would

grip them because it went to the roots of their personal problems. The ordinary man was at present a "debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being", but once shown the reason for, and the way out of, his current misery, would be transformed into a revolutionary force demanding "social freedom". For Marx the wage-labourer represented the most extreme form of human degradation, and, (following Leroux and Considerant) he pointed to the emergence of a new class of urban wage-labourers, the 'proletariat', who symbolised "the complete loss of man". These workers' condition was so appalling, he added, that they could not realistically be viewed as an interest group with particular grievances: they were the victims of "wrong generally", and hence could emancipate themselves only by a thoroughgoing reconstruction of society which would amount to "the complete rewinning of man".⁴¹

Marx's use of the term 'proletariat' was not precise, and it is impossible to tell exactly which social strata he included within it. But it does seem as though he was referring to urban workers (i.e., it apparently excluded agricultural labourers and peasants), and he definitely linked it with industrialisation, distinguishing between a new kind of poor worker created by recent socio-economic change and the "naturally arising poor...mechanically oppressed by the gravity of society", who had presumably always existed. He

41. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 619-620; MECW, 3, p. 186.

mentioned that the ranks of the proletariat were filled by families originating mainly in the "middle estate", which sounds as though he was thinking of previously self-employed craftsmen and tradesmen reduced to working for employers. Prima facie, then, what Marx meant (initially) by a 'proletarian' was any wage-labourer, whether a factory worker or an artisan employed in a small workshop, and whether skilled or unskilled.⁴² This, incidentally, seems to have been the current usage among the French socialists in Paris in the 1840s from whom Marx picked up the term. The label, it must be emphasised, did not differentiate factory workers from artisans, and in fact most 'proletarians' in Paris in the 1840s were artisans, since there were very few large factories using steam-powered machinery.

As we have seen, Marx was now convinced of the need for a social transformation in Britain, France and Germany, the only European countries to which he paid any attention. In the "Introduction" he was silent about England, about which he still knew very little, and had probably not yet considered how the necessary transformation might occur there. But he did offer some opinions on the means whereby change might be effected in Germany and France. Germany was a société bloquée which would only make progress through a violent upheaval; when an insurrection did break out there it would bring social revolution in its train, but Marx,

42. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), pp. 619-620; MECW, 3, pp. 186-187.

(disagreeing in this respect with Engels), was by no means convinced that Germany was yet on the eve of her 1789, although he was sure this would arrive eventually. Influenced by Leroux's and Considerant's pacifism and gradualism, his perspective on France was very different.

In France, Marx stated, the role of liberator was passing in sequence from class to class, ending up with the 'proletariat', which would want to add social to political freedom. He expected that social liberation would be achieved gradually through the medium of a democratically elected parliamentary government, and that the eventual success of workers' demands for social rights would bring "general, human liberation" too. Unlike in Germany, the social revolution could be peaceful in France because there was plenty of scope for piecemeal reform through democratic politics and socialist propaganda. But in one crucial respect, his scenarios for social change in France and Germany were the same: the social group instrumental in forcing it through would be the new urban work-force. This class, he admitted, was as yet tiny in Germany, but he claimed it was coming into existence as a result of Germany's rising industrial development. He seems to have regarded it as already quite large in France, taking as accurate Leroux's and Considerant's claims on this score. He apparently assumed, moreover, that the majority of urban workers were already sympathetic to some kind of socialism or communism and were demanding en masse the abolition of private property (a demand which

he himself now endorsed). Given this widespread sympathy among the French lower classes for drastic social change, he did not envisage too much difficulty in converting them to a more philosophical socialism (along the lines of his own or Leroux's beliefs); philosophy, he wrote, would find its "material weapons in the proletariat" while the workers would find their "spiritual weapons in philosophy".⁴³

Like Hess, Marx put considerable emphasis on the education of the urban lower classes. He regarded the proletariat as, at present, only semi-human. Deprived culturally and materially, it had to be rescued on the material level by a more egalitarian distribution of wealth, but, more important, it had to be rescued on the moral level by an infusion of the humanist values of German philosophy. He thus aimed at saving the 'souls' of the workers as well as their bodies; he reiterated that the ideals of Young Hegelianism could not be implemented until the proletarians were turned into proper human beings, but that, pari passu, the proletariat could not be abolished until a new kind of genuinely human social order was created. In this way he equated the overcoming of the European spiritual crisis with the creation of an economic system eschewing wage-labour and profit. The social revolution would thus necessarily be both moral and economic. It was not going to come tomorrow, Marx recognised; social emancipation would likely proceed slowly in France in the wake of further political reforms, and at some time in the future a German revolution would be sparked off

43. Ibid, MEGA 1, 1 (1), p. 620; MECW, 3, p. 187.

by "the ringing call of the Gallic cock". But in the meantime the preconditions had to mature in both countries, and that meant increased industrialisation and the education of the mass of workers in a humanitarian, socialist philosophy.⁴⁴

Thus, when he wrote the "Introduction", Marx still believed that the core problem which had to be solved before European civilisation could progress further was that of the prevalent debasement of human nature. His ultimate goal remained the one he had adopted during his student days at Bonn: to remake human nature, to make men truly human once again. Since he had begun living in Paris and talking to French socialists, the 'proletariat' had come to symbolise for him man at his most "lost", "alienated" or "dehumanised". So, he concluded, only if the problems of pauperism and wage-labour -- the social question -- could be solved, would it be possible to regenerate the human race. He called this regeneration "universal, human liberation", and it required, he believed, three stages: (i) republican democracy, i.e., political and religious liberation (a parliamentary government based on popular sovereignty would, he assumed, have to be secular); (ii) socialism, i.e., social and economic liberation (including the abolition of private property and the end of the artificial impoverishment of the masses); and (iii) the restoration of a free, harmonious human personality integrated into a fraternal, co-operative community.

44. Ibid, MEGA I, 1 (1), p. 621; MECW, 3, p. 187.

Marx had not, it is worth noting, yet equated this third stage with communism. He was more intransigently hostile to private property than ever before, but he was still not attracted to the doctrinaire 'utopian communism' of Babouvians like Dézamy or the Icarians led by Cabet.

CHAPTER 5

ENGELS IN MANCHESTER: FRENCH SOCIALISM, CARLYLE, AND ECONOMICS

Before examining Marx's further encounters with the work of other French socialists in the spring and summer of 1844, we must move across the Channel to see how Engels' ideas were evolving during these winter months. Engels had not previously shown much interest in the French left, but in early November 1843 he published a series of articles with the general title "Progress of Social Reform on the Continent" in the Quenite journal, The New Moral World, posing -- not without some justification -- as an informed observer of French socialism who could explain the French scene to the English working class movement.¹ How had he obtained his information? Clearly not from personal observation, since he had spent 1843 in Manchester except for occasional trips to the south of England, and one to Belgium. He had read Lorenz von Stein's Der Socialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs, but had not been overly impressed with it -- still, he probably drew some of his factual material from its

1. Friedrich Engels, "Progress of Social Reform on the Continent", The New Moral World, nos. 19 & 21, 4 & 18/11/43; MEGA 1, 2, pp. 435-449; MECW, 3, pp. 329-408; German translation in WERKE, 1, pp. 480-496.

pages.² He had chanced to make the acquaintance of a rather eccentric English Christian socialist called Godwin Barmby, who was interested in continental socialism and had a collection of French socialist and communist pamphlets.³ He had developed his contacts with prominent militants in the Chartist movement, one of whom, Bronterre O'Brien, had in 1836 published a translation of Buonarroti's Conspiracy pour l'égalité dite de Babeuf, and another of whom, George Harney, the editor of the central Chartist organ, The Northern Star, was of a cosmopolitan frame of mind and tried to keep up with what was happening on the continent.⁴ By now a convert to Owenism, Engels had made friends not only with the leading Manchester Owenite, John Watts, but also with the editor of The New Moral World, G.A. Fleming, who had some contacts among the French left.⁵ So there were several English sources on whom Engels no doubt relied in part. But

2. Lorenz von Stein, Der Socialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs, Leipzig, 1842. Engels, "Briefe aus London, III", loc. cit., MEGA I, 2, p. 374; MECW, 3, p. 388.

3. Engels, "French Communism", The New Moral World, no. 32, 3/2/44; MEGA I, 2, p. 454; MECW, 3, p. 414.

4. Philippe Buonarroti, History of Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality... (trans. Bronterre O'Brien), London, Hetherington, 1836. This was a translation of Conspiracy pour l'égalité dite de Babeuf..., Bruxelles, La Librairie romantique, 1828. It is difficult to pin down when Marx read this, but it was probably in the summer of 1844, whereas Engels likely read the English version some months earlier.

5. Engels, "Briefe aus London, III", loc. cit., MEGA I, 2, p. 371; MECW, 3, p. 385.

probably he drew most heavily on letters he received from German friends in Paris.

Engels had been on good terms with Georg Herwegh, the editor of the Schweizerischer Republikaner, and had corresponded with him in Switzerland. In the early fall of 1843 Herwegh moved to Paris to take part in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher venture, while Moses Hess, another friend and correspondent of Engels (who was an avid letter writer) was already back there together with Ruge. The two men kept him in touch with the doings of the little Young Hegelian circle in the French capital, and, as we saw earlier, invited him to contribute to their planned review. Herwegh and Engels in fact met in Ostend in September or October 1843 to discuss the project, and Engels proposed contributions.⁶ Most probably, then, he gleaned much of his information about current French socialism from Hess' and Herwegh's accounts of the Parisian scene. His occasional inaccuracies may have reflected the limitations of their knowledge, or their uncritical relaying of claims made in the French pamphlet literature they picked up.

In the section on France in his "Progress of Social Reform", Engels showed a fairly comprehensive awareness of the different varieties of French socialism, without always carefully distinguishing their doctrinal differences. He

6. Gustav Mayer, Friedrich Engels: A Biography, N.Y., Knopf, 1936.

mentioned eight kinds: Babouvism, Fourierism, Saint-Simonianism, Icarianism, Dézamy's revolutionary-egalitarian communism, and the personal systems of Leroux, Lamennais, and Proudhon.⁷ His knowledge of certain of these was obviously thin; for example, he appeared unaware of Leroux's and Proudhon's criticisms of Babouvism and Icarianism, and called them both 'communists'. However, he may have seemed more ignorant than he actually was in this respect, because he used the label 'communist' very loosely in the essay, and apparently deliberately so. One thesis he wanted to argue was that, notwithstanding the different origins of "the doctrine of community" in France, Germany and Britain, the doctrinal differences between the three working-class movements were relatively minor. As he sometimes used the term, then, 'communist' applied to any scheme for a co-operative community, whether it was along the lines proposed by Owen, Weitling, Cabet, or, presumably, even Fourier. Yet, on the other hand, he clearly recognised that Icarianism was egalitarian, anti-capitalist, and non-propertarian in a way that Fourierism was not, and called the former 'communist' to distinguish it from the latter. His usage of the terms 'socialism' and 'communism' was thus not consistent, but it definitely differed from Marx's in the last months of 1843 (Marx, it will be remembered, used the label 'socialist' in a vague, general way to indicate all left-wing

7. "Progress of Social Reform on the Continent", loc. cit., MEGA I, 2, pp. 435-449; MECW, 3, pp. 393-399.

advocates of social as opposed to political reform, and within this broad category distinguished between 'communists', who wished to totally abolish private possessions, and more moderate socialists, who did not).

Engels, then, regarded most brands of French socialism as comparatively close to Owenism, although he stressed that French militants generally placed more value on political liberties than did the English. Like Marx, he considered that the French "road to communism" lay through parliamentary democracy, although he too claimed that political liberty by itself was an inadequate, even dangerous, kind of "sham-liberty". The French Revolution, he wrote, had shown that political democracy without social democracy was inherently contradictory and sooner or later inevitably broke down, turning into "undisguised despotism" (*i.e.*, the rule of Napoleon). 'Communism' was thus the logical continuation of democratic republicanism; he regarded Owenism and Chartism as essentially complementary, and considered that the French left had sensibly avoided the artificial divorce between agitation for universal suffrage and for social reform.⁸

Engels used two main criteria in judging different French socialist sects and theoretical systems: whether or not they recognised the need for both community of property and equality of income, and whether they had provided a

8. *Ibid*, MEGA I, 2, p. 436; MECW, 3, p. 393.

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detailed, concrete analysis of the harmful workings of the capitalist economy. On these counts, the French thinkers who did best were (according to his reckoning) Cabet, Fourier, and Proudhon.⁹ He was highly impressed with Icarianism, which he perceived as the most popular and most modern form of 'communism' (in the stricter sense of the word). There were, he claimed on two different occasions in The New Moral World, about half a million French communists, the vast majority of whom were followers of Cabet. This was, in fact, a gross over-estimate which, to judge from the circulation figures of Cabet's newspaper, Le Populaire, multiplied reality by a factor of ten. He seems to have been led into error because he took at face value the claim (which he probably found in some pro-Icarian literature) that the "great bulk of the French working-classes" now supported Cabet. This, of course, was not true, but on the other hand it was the case that Cabet had a larger working-class following than any other French socialist, and it also seems to have been true that Icarianism in the early 1840s largely absorbed residual lower-class support for older forms of French communism like Babouvism. Clearly what seduced Engels was this fact of urban worker adherence to Cabet's movement. He argued that early Babouvian communism had been "rough and superficial" and in any case ahead of its time,

9. Ibid, MEGA 1, 2, n. 435; MEGA, 3, n. 302.

so that it found no widespread echo in the "public mind". After the failure of Babouf's conspiracy, he contended, French communism had died a natural death until the July Revolution of 1830. Then, in the mid-1830s, when it became obvious that the middle classes, who had seized power in 1830, were not about to concede a democratic republic to the workers who had fought on the barricades, there was a spontaneous revival of revolutionary communism in "the dark lanes and crowded alleys of the Parisian suburb, Saint-Antoine". This quickly spread to Lyon, Toulouse and "the other large manufacturing towns of the realm" -- it was, alleged Engels, a mass (though secret) working-class movement, divided into several different 'parties' (including the Travailleurs socialistes and Dézobry's L'Humanitaire group). Since the publication of Cabet's propaganda-novel, Voyage en Icarie and the establishment of Le Populaire in 1841, he claimed, the Icarian version of communist doctrine had won the allegiance of almost all these revolutionary republican urban workers. In consequence, he added, French communism was oriented more towards the state than, say, Owenism: "the bulk of the French communists...want a community state of society, under a republican form of government".¹⁰

Though broadly sympathetic, Engels was in several respects rather critical of Icarianism. He regarded Cabet

10. Ibid, HEGA 1, 2, pp. 439-40; MECU, 3, pp. 396-397.

as merely a propagandist and agitator, dismissed his writings as "superficial", and judged French communism thin on factual analysis. He believed his own synthesis of Young Hegelianism and Owenism to be doctrinally much superior. The Icarians, he argued, had mistakenly rejected philosophy and had failed to emancipate themselves from Christianity. Furthermore, their political tactics were mistaken; they kept to the old Babouvian policy of secret societies and intended overthrowing the government by force. He considered this penchant for secrecy and violence quite understandable given the French 'national character' and the traditional despotism of French political regimes, but nonetheless thought it unnecessary and "contrary to common prudence". Presumably he himself supported, at this time, the Chartist strategy of mass meetings and petitions, although he was not insensitive to the difficulties of implementing such a strategy in France given the government's willingness to employ the soldiery against any demonstration in favour of social reform. Still, he was basically out of sympathy with Icarianism over its political methods, its contempt for sophisticated theory, and its Christianity.

On the other hand, he found plenty to praise in Icarian doctrine. Cabet's scheme for a co-operative community was little different from Owen's, he noted, and genuinely aimed at creating a society embodying the maximum of "real liberty and real equality". The Icarians had "embodied in their plans everything rational they found in Saint-Simon

and Fourier" and were, in consequence, "very much superior to the old French Communists", who had been regrettably ignorant of history and political economy, and hostile to science and fine art. They were rightly critical of the institution of marriage and the present penal system, holding progressive views on education, sexual relations, and the treatment of criminals and old people. Icarianism was, in short, a rational and humanitarian doctrine, despite its inadequacies. On balance, he judged it inferior to Owenism, largely because of Cabet's failure to provide any detailed analysis and critique of the capitalist economy. He also considered that Cabet had paid insufficient attention to the problem of how the nation, as opposed to individual communes, was to be run. Owen and the German communist Weitling were both superior in this respect, proposing the abolition of all centralised governmental organs backed by force, and the establishment instead of "a mere administration, organising the different branches of labour, and distributing its produce". Engels thus came out firmly in favour of the abolition of the bourgeois state rather than its utilisation for socialist ends. He had been won over by the anti-étatiste strain in the European socialist movement.¹¹

If he failed to include Cabet in the top rank of socialist theorists, he had no intention of downplaying the

11. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, pp. 441-442; MECW, 3, pp.398-399.

contribution made by Frenchmen to the body of common doctrine he hoped would become widely accepted by workingmen on both sides of the Channel. He discussed with respect and enthusiasm the writings of several other prominent French socialist writers, praising in particular Fourier, Leroux and Proudhon. Saint-Simon and the Saint-Simonians he had little time for; the general spirit of their doctrines was admirably reformist, he remarked, but they were lamentably prone to envelop their sensible ideas in "clouds of unintelligible mysticism", and their economic principles were anti-egalitarian. Avowedly following the arguments of his old mentor Börne, he took a radical stand on the issue of wages. In a co-operative community, he asserted, skilled and unskilled workers should receive the same remuneration -- a man should not be further discriminated against because he had been endowed by nature with less talent than his fellow, and all differential wages sinned against the principle of equality. On these grounds, Engels criticised both the Saint-Simonians and the Fourierists. Fourierism, he maintained, was marred by one very serious inconsistency, its failure to abolish private property. The phalansteries were supposed to be co-operative associations, but Fourier had suggested that not only should skilled workers receive higher pay, but those members of the co-operative who had originally contributed capital should receive dividends on it. In effect, then, there would be 'owners' of the phalansteries, able to make a profit on their investment, which meant that

in Fourier's 'utopia' there would still be rich and poor, capitalists and workers. To Engels this was absurd -- it destroyed the whole point of abolishing capitalism in the first place, and negated the rest of Fourier's work. "After all the beautiful theories of association and free labour", he commented, "after a good deal of indignant declamation against commerce, selfishness and competition, we have in practice the old competitive system upon an improved plan, a poor-law bastille on more liberal principles!" Fourierism, therefore, was an unsatisfactory halfway house between capitalism and communism.¹²

Yet despite his critique of Fourierism, Engels had great admiration for Fourier and also for Considerant, whom he praised as one of the cleverest French socialist writers. Fourier, he stated, was a "mighty intellect" whose works could be read with "greater pleasure...and more real value" than those of the Saint-Simonians. As a theorist, Fourier was in the highest class, a class in which he seems to have included, at this time, only two other men: Owen and Proudhon. Fourier's great virtue, he explained, was that, unlike the Saint-Simonians, he was a social scientist. The reader could discard the poetry and mysticism in the Frenchman's writings and a hard core would remain: "scientific research, cool, unbiassed, systematic thought; in short, social philosophy". He sketched briefly Fourier's theory that labour was

12. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, pp. 437-438; MECW, 3, pp. 394-395.

inherently enjoyable but was denatured by the coercive irrationality of the existing social system. Fourier, he added, was the first to establish "the great axiom of social philosophy", the proposition that all individuals had a natural inclination to some kind of work and if they were left to choose their jobs the wants of the whole society would be automatically provided for without the intimidation and bribery used by the capitalist system. This assertion, he admitted, appeared bold, but after Fourier's mode of establishing it, it was "quite unassailable, almost self-evident". Clearly, he had been won over by Fourier's vision of a community in which labour would be free and joyous as well as co-operative. Purged of its capitalist accretions, Fourier's phalanstery looked to Engels remarkably like his old Romantic ideal of an organic society, in which the individual would be at once in harmony with his fellow human beings and free to cultivate his own talents and personality.¹³

Engels had thus merged certain key Fourierist doctrines with his newly acquired Owenite 'communism'. He seems to have been impressed also with two other French writers, Leroux and Proudhon. About Leroux he had little to say, except that he was one of the "most eminent minds in France", which may indicate that he had received glowing reports of Leroux from Hess and Herwegh but had not as yet read much of

13. Ibid.

the man's work. Proudhon's Qu'est-ce que la propriété, however, he had read, although he apparently knew little about the author. It was, he affirmed, a brilliant and important book, "the most philosophical, on the part of the Communists, in the French language". Of all French socialist literature, he announced, Proudhon's work was the most deserving of translation into English. Like Fourier, Proudhon had done his homework, describing with powerful intellect and "real scientific research" the social consequences of the institution of private property, namely "competition, immorality [and] misery". Moreover, Engels added enthusiastically, he had confronted the crucial question of the nature of the state, and had proved that every kind of government, democratic or not, was objectionable because based on force. In even the most perfect form of political democracy the majority unavoidably oppressed the minority, so in order to abolish political oppression it was necessary to abolish government per se. Engels was convinced this could be done if the will to do it was there. Like Hess some months earlier, he explicitly endorsed Proudhon's slogan, "Nous voulons l'anarchie!" What we want, he concluded, is "the rule of nobody, the responsibility of every one to nobody but himself". Proudhon, it seems, rather than Owen or Weitling, was probably most responsible for Engels' conversion to anti-étatisme.¹⁴

14. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, p. 442; MECU, 3, p. 399.

If we make two fairly reasonable assumptions, that Engels in "Social Progress" and his subsequent shorter articles wrote down virtually everything he knew about French socialism, and that he had had the benefit of Hess' and Herwegh's opinions on the subject, we can deduce some tentative conclusions about his and the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher group's knowledge of the French left at the end of 1843. Though incomplete, it was fairly extensive. The group in Paris -- but probably not Engels since there is no mention of the paper in "Progress" -- read La Réforme, and had at least one contact among the 'red' republicans, Louis Blanc. They (including Engels) knew about the Icarian movement, Cabet's Voyage en Icarie, the newspaper Le Populaire, and had contacts with Cabet's more violent rival for rank-and-file communist support, Dézamy; indeed their familiarity with Dézamy's rhetoric of armed insurrection apparently led them to suppose (probably erroneously) that Cabet and his supporters espoused violent revolution too. The Parisian Germans (not Engels), knew Démocratie pacifique and some of Considerant's writings; they therefore were aware of Fourierism but had probably not read any of Fourier's own works. Engels, on the other hand, knew the Fourierists' theoretical journal, Phalange, but when he wrote "Progress" was unaware of Considerant's new daily (he was informed of its title by G.A. Fleming and the information was included in a footnote to his article); still, he had already begun reading Fourier

himself, presumably on the advice of one of his English sources. Both Engels and the Young Hegelians in Paris were impressed by Proudhon's first mémoire on property, the latter also knowing his major second work, De la Création de l'ordre dans l'humanité (1843), but they had no personal contact with him. La Revue indépendante, the literary and philosophical periodical edited by Leroux and Georges Sand, was well known to Engels and the Jahrbücher staff, and it is likely the latter met Leroux. Lamennais, too, was a figure familiar to Engels and to the men in Paris, but only Ruge seems to have regarded him as a really important thinker. As for the Saint-Simonians, Engels and the Parisian Young Hegelians were aware that the movement existed, but knew relatively little about it, and tended to dismiss it as out-of-date; Engels, quite possibly echoing Hess' opinion, commented in his "Progress" article that it had flashed across the social horizon like a "brilliant meteor", but was now no longer thought of or spoken of: "its time is past".¹⁵

In summary, then, there were two significant differences between Marx's and Engels' knowledge of French socialism as the new year of 1844 opened: Engels had already plunged into the study of Fourier whereas Marx had not; Marx knew the work of Blanc and Leroux while Engels probably knew neither. There was, of course, another, much more major, difference in ideology between the two men: Engels' socialism

15. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, p. 437; MECW, 3, p. 394.

bore the imprint of his experience in England whereas Marx's, so far, was largely French in origin. Engels was anxious that his friends in Paris should also benefit from his discoveries in England. His two contributions to the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher were attempts to articulate what he had learned from the Chartists, Owenites, and his observations of English industrial life.

Engels was well aware of the social and economic divergencies between Germany and England. Germany, he recognised, had comparatively little manufacturing industry, and the mass of workers were artisans. German communism had first been articulated by itinerant craftsmen like Weitling, and was hardly the ideology of a new factory proletariat, which scarcely existed. But in addition to Weitling's rather primitive artisan communism, there had emerged a new "philosophical communism", an outgrowth of the Young Hegelian movement and pioneered by Moses Hess. It was doctrinally very close to Owenism, which proved there was no incompatibility between German philosophy and the empirical, factual analysis of European society undertaken by writers like Owen, Proudhon, and Fourier. Engels also recognised that as informed investigators of concrete social problems the Owenites were far ahead of the German communists, yet he maintained that philosophically English empiricism was naive and outmoded. It therefore seemed crystal-clear that the most advanced brand of German philosophy, Young Hegelianism, should be combined with the work of the most 'scientific'

European social theorists. He had found no work that even came near so doing, but in 1843 he did come across a new book which at least blended the ideals of German Romanticism with a concern for the social problems produced by industrialisation in England: Thomas Carlyle's Past and Present. To Engels in provincial Lancashire the work seemed like an oasis in a cultural desert; it was, he remarked, "of all the fat books and thin pamphlets which have appeared in England in the past year....the only one which is worth reading".¹⁶

Fundamentally, Past and Present appealed to Engels because it evaluated the subject he was most interested in -- the social and moral consequences of industrial capitalism -- from the perspective of ethical convictions similar to his own. This was why he felt Carlyle's book to be "the only one that strikes a human chord, presents human relations, and shows traces of a human point of view" -- Carlyle was the one British sage interested in the condition of the lower classes who had thoroughly immersed himself (as Engels had) in the literature of German Romanticism and who had studied German Idealist philosophy. Engels was amused at the puzzled reception which Past and Present had had among the English

16. "Die Lage Englands. Past and Present by Thomas Carlyle" ("The Condition of England. Past and Present by Thomas Carlyle"), Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher, Paris 1844; MEGA I, 2, pp. 405-431 (quotation, p. 405); MECW, 3, pp. 444-468 (quotation, p. 444). For an alternate account of Engels' reaction to Past and Present, see Steven Marcus, Engels, Manchester, and the Working Class, N.Y., Vintage, 1975, pp. 102-112. Marcus over-emphasises Engels' debt to Carlyle.

'reading public'. Carlyle's approach was so far removed from the orthodoxies of Ricardian political economy and Malthusian social thought, he noted, that "nobody really knows what to make of it all". Of course, for those who knew the German antecedents of Carlyle's position, there was no difficulty, and Engels confidently summed up his place in the contemporary intellectual spectrum: "On the one hand vestiges of Tory romanticism and humane attitudes originating with Goethe, and on the other sceptical-empirical England, these factors are sufficient for one to deduce the whole of Carlyle's view of the world from them."¹⁷

There was a note of condescension in Engels' attitude to Carlyle. He viewed him as a kindred spirit whose heart was in the right place but whose education was deficient in certain ways. Carlyle, he thought, was travelling along the same intellectual road that he himself had followed -- his moral values were sound, he had appreciated the right cultural heroes, he had chosen wisely his political and intellectual enemies, and he was concerned with the most important problems. But, unfortunately, his analysis was marred by two lacunae: his philosophical training was imperfect (philosophically, he had much in common with the young Schelling and Strauss), and he had not taken the trouble to study Owenism, so that his critique of classical political economy was insufficiently grounded in a detailed knowledge of the

17. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, p. 424; MECW, 3, p. 461.

workings of the industrial economy. Engels himself felt open to the latter charge, though he at least, unlike Carlyle, had already recognised what he had to study and from whom he could learn, namely, economics from Owen and the neo-Ricardian socialists. But he had no hesitancy in setting Carlyle right on more philosophical matters.

There were three vital points on which Carlyle was wrong, he argued: theology, history, and social relations. He interpreted Carlyle's religion as a form of pantheism derived from Goethe and Schelling (i.e., the outlook Engels himself had held in the early 1840s), and referred Carlyle to the writings of Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach for an exhaustive refutation of pantheism. He claimed that Carlyle's adherence to certain 'absolute', transcendental values and his fervent adulation of an ideal medieval society were equally a-historical; in this respect Carlyle had been unfaithful to his idol Goethe, who had possessed a strong sense of human creativity in art and history, desiring to free both from any link with God. The Young Hegelians, asserted Engels, were the first philosophers to adopt a thoroughly historical perspective, going beyond even Hegel to make man the measure of all things and the source of all values. Carlyle's humanism was thus vitiated by his failure to recognise that "God is man", i.e., that there was available no source of ethical values beyond men's emotions and reason. Moreover, Carlyle's faith in absolute values had led him into rhetorical

moralising about the "rottenness", "hollowness" and "Hypocrisy" of the age. Not that his diagnosis was in error; on the contrary, he had admirably exposed the inner decay of contemporary social institutions. The trouble was that he had simply denounced these as evil and "soulless" without troubling to explain why they had rotted. For example, he recognised the callous inhumanity of a social system founded on "competition" and "Hammonism" and attacked some of the abuses of landownership, but he had failed to see that private property was the root of these evils. In short, Carlyle had not penetrated to the underlying foundations of inhuman social relations, being content to fight the symptoms while remaining ignorant of the cause of the disease.¹⁸

Notwithstanding all these inadequacies, Engels rated Carlyle's overview of the general crisis as "infinitely far in advance of that of the mass of educated people in England". Nevertheless, his polemic was too "abstract and theoretical", lacking any constructive proposals for social reform. In this respect he was the exact opposite of most Owenites, who had virtually despaired of 'theory' and become severely practical and materialist, proposing an assortment of detailed remedies "rather in the manner of Morison's pills". Both Carlyle and the English socialists were in Engels' view terribly one-sided. The English working-class movement would

18. Ibid, MEGA 1,2, pp. 424-426; MECW, 3, pp. 461-463.

therefore have to develop a synthesis of the two which would discard the narrow nationalism and short-sighted materialism of the Owenites, while bringing the values and insights of German philosophy (which Carlyle had intuited) down from the clouds. He had high hopes that Carlyle himself might soon achieve this synthesis.¹⁹

In fact, Engels was mistaken about the course of Carlyle's mental evolution, and his remarks applied with greater accuracy to his own. They indicated -- and this was very important -- that he was softening his Hegelian hostility to empiricism. He had not lost it entirely, but he was searching for a philosophy which would combine the virtues (as he saw them) of 'dialectical' reasoning with a less cavalier attitude to the facts. He still, on occasion, called himself a Young Hegelian, but he was no longer satisfied with the 'school' for two reasons: (a) unlike him and his handful of his friends in Paris, the Young Hegelians in Germany had not embraced "communism", and (b) he recognised that, despite its historical orientation, German philosophy inclined to verbose abstractions which merely impeded the concrete sociological research he now believed was required.

So if Engels pulled no punches in laying bare the defects of Carlyle's book, he was nonetheless highly impressed with it as an exposé of what was wrong with English, and implicitly European, social and intellectual life. After

19. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, pp. 430-431; MECW, 3, p. 467.

summarising Carlyle's analysis of the chaos and decadence of English society, he commented: "we must allow the truth of all he says".²⁰ Carlyle had achieved in Past and Present what he himself had been struggling to do, that is, to demonstrate in detail, through an exhaustive case-study of the victim in extremis, the general Romantic case that Europe was in the throes of moral and social crisis. Above all, he had forthrightly linked the anti-social behaviour of the ruling English social groups (bribery, laziness, exploitation, egoism, etc.,) with the demise of the old social order and the spirit of 'community' associated with it. Like Engels (and, for that matter, like Marx, Hess, Blanc, Leroux, and Considerant), Carlyle believed fervently that modern capitalist society, governed by the lust for money, had reduced men to bewildered isolates who had lost all sense of their worth as human beings and their part within a wider human community. He repudiated utterly the cluster of values and doctrines -- a loose amalgam of Utilitarianism, hedonism, 'laissez-faire' liberalism, and Malthusianism -- which sanctioned the functioning of this new, fragmented society composed of 'soulless' atoms submerged in their own 'brute individuality'. With both Carlyle's ruthless social analysis and his value-critique, Engels was in total agreement.²¹

20. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, pp. 418-419; MECU, 3, p. 456.

21. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, p. 419; MECW, 3, p. 456.

His review of Past and Present also indicated which of Carlyle's themes had struck the strongest chords in his own mind and emotions. As regards politics, he endorsed without hesitation the English writer's attack on Whiggism and liberalism. English liberalism, he maintained, was narrow-minded and hypocritical, an ideology of the middle classes, not a comprehensive political philosophy based on natural rights. The minds of the educated classes in England were "closed to all progress", and the tyranny of 'right-thinking' public opinion was such that self-confessed democrats and atheists were ostracised socially and regarded as mentally disturbed. If it came to a choice, the Tories were marginally preferable to the Whigs, since at least some of them -- men like Ashley and Oastler -- had a philanthropic concern with lower-class misery and sometimes took the part of the factory workers against the manufacturers. But it was not so much the class bias of the educated élite's politics that horrified Engels as its intellectual sterility. "A decrepit culture", he called it, observing that the mental life of the educated English was just as boring as their "blasé and effete fashionable society". He repeated a favourite theme of his: the contrast between this middle-class mediocrity and the lively underground intellectual activity of small independent socialist printers and lecturers. Again he mentioned a fact which had evidently shocked him -- the boycott of Strauss' Das Leben Jesu by all 'respectable' English publishing houses. England, he concluded, might be

the freest nation politically, but this was outweighed by the tyranny of public opinion and the manipulation of parliament by the aristocracy and middle classes. He perceived the country as sharply divided: on one side, there were the aristocracy and middle classes, spiritually exhausted and morally despicable; on the other side, there were the workers, "morally degraded" and uncouth in their customs, but still "flexible material", unspoilt by prejudices and a strong voice for reform. For Engels the choice between the two groups was clear: England's 'salvation' would come from the worker because they alone still had "the strength for a great national deed"; they alone had "a future".²²

A second theme of Carlyle's which Engels reiterated in his essay was the attack on liberal political economy. He agreed that the value-system underlying the works of Smith and Ricardo was, in Carlyle's phrase, "the gospel of hammon". Following Carlyle, he assailed the theory and practice of laissez-faire on a variety of grounds. Quoting Carlyle's metaphor of industrialisation as a Midas creating unusable wealth, he stressed the sharpening divorce between rich and poor in England and argued that fabulous prosperity for the entrepreneurs and landowners had brought only pauperism and workhouses for the lower classes. Liberal democracy, when combined with liberal economics, he charged, evidently meant

22. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 441-442 and 442-443; ibid, 5, pp. 444-447 and 467.

liberty to starve. He was disgusted by the English government's apparent indifference to famine, disease and unemployment, and gave his full emotional support to the Manchester 'insurgents' who, in August 1842, had demonstrated that they would no longer put up with their miserable fate. Although he had recently expressed sympathy for anarchism, he now went to the opposite extreme, appealing (with Carlyle) for a government which would govern.²³

Thirdly, Engels shared Carlyle's conviction that the status quo could not endure. But, despite his proclaimed faith in the regeneration of the lower classes and the possibility of 'progress', he was still uncertain how the sick society would be cured. There was, he admitted, no panacea. While he supported Chartism, he had been convinced by the Owenites that political democracy, in itself, would make no fundamental alteration to the structure of power, wealth and privilege which moulded English social relations. Musing on the Manchester 'insurrection' of 1842 (the so-called Plug Plot), he concluded that the rebels had failed because they had been unable to get to grips with the amorphous evil they wished to destroy. "The evil they suffered was social", he noted, "and social evils cannot be abolished as the monarchy or privileges are abolished. Social evils cannot be cured by People's Charters". This being so, one had to recognise that universal suffrage, desirable as it was, could do no

23. *Ibid*, MEGA I, 2, pp. 416-418; MEGA, 3, pp. 411-412.

more than a transitional stage "towards real human freedom". How should the labour movement proceed once it had achieved the ballot, and what else should it campaign for in the meantime? Engels had his long-term vision, but he was unsure of the intermediate steps.

Social philosophy -- and that included his own as well as Carlyle's -- was still in its infancy, he declared; at the moment it either propounded some general principles about the goal to be striven for, or else tried to administer a few palliatives on an ad hoc basis. This was not good enough, and the solution lay in further study. What, most of all, should be studied? Two things in particular: economic theory and social conditions. Socialists needed a new humanitarian but "scientific" approach to economic problems, and this required, as a preliminary, a careful critique of existing classical political economy. They also needed a much more detailed and comprehensive knowledge of lower-class working and living conditions. He concluded his article on Carlyle with a promise to undertake such a social survey for the industrial towns of England.²⁴

Engels' other essay in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher represented his first concerted attempt to carry out a critical investigation into the discipline of political economy developed by Adam Smith, J-B. Say, David Ricardo,

24. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, pp. 411, 419 & 431; MECW, e, p. 450, 457 & 468.

Thomas Malthus, and James Mill. Entitled "Outline of a Critique of Political Economy", the article did two things at once: it clarified further Engels' general values and viewpoint, and it set out his specific opinions on more technical questions of economic theory.²⁵ In order to write the article, he had, during the summer and fall of 1843, done a lot of reading and thinking about economic problems and classical political economy. He had been drawn into this line of inquiry by his job as an apprentice manager in a Manchester cotton manufacturing firm -- a grasp of commercial principles and trading conditions was a sine qua non for a businessman's son being groomed to eventually take over the business. But he was also interested in Smithian and Ricardian economics because he perceived that was where English socialist theory, whether Owenite or neo-Ricardian, took its starting-point. If John Watt was right it would be possible to utilise classical political economy, suitably transformed, as a concrete basis for a realistic programme of social reform. The new science would be based on socialist values, presupposing the abolition of private property, and would continue the work of English socialists like Owen.²⁶

Engels set out his new opinions on economics within

25. "Umriss zu einer Kritik der Nationalökonomie" ("Outline of a Critique of Political Economy"), Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, Paris 1844; MEGA I, 2, pp. 379-404; MECW, 3, pp. 418-443.

26. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, p. 382; MECW, 3, p. 421.

a broader intellectual framework. He offered a threefold critique of English life, examining the dominant ideas embraced by the intelligentsia, delineating the features of the moral crisis he believed permeated the society, and pointing to many of the social evils created by industrial capitalism. His main intellectual targets were the Enlightenment, classical political economy, and Thomas Malthus.

He viewed the Enlightenment as an incomplete intellectual revolution against Christianity; it had, he charged, become bogged down in one-sided abstractions like 'materialism' and 'social contract' theory, failing to question the validity of private property and the centralised state. Smithian economics exhibited these deficiencies -- it defended cut-throat competition, private property, and free-trade, the "premisses" which had given birth to the factory system and "modern slavery". Moreover, the classical economists had been compelled by the logic of their new discipline to abandon "the humane spirit" of the eighteenth century for a cynical, hard-headed realism (in the case of Ricardo), or a crude and hypocritical "sham philanthropy" (in the case of Malthus). Engels was shocked by the 'vulgar' Malthusianism he had encountered among Lancashire businessmen, and morally affronted by the utterances of contemporary Ricardians like James Mill and John McCulloch. In his experience the ideology of the average English entrepreneur combined a heartless social policy with a fervent belief in 'laissez-faire' and a primitive faith in the virtues of 'self-interest'. It

epitomised all he loathed, and to his mind demonstrated the dangers of unregulated industrialisation in a society which had adopted the 'materialistic' values of the Enlightenment.²⁷

He held Smith, Malthus, and Ricardo primarily responsible for developing this inhuman ideology. Since commerce was no more than a sophisticated form of fraud and robbery, he maintained, it was impossible to place laissez-faire capitalism on a moral foundation. Smithian political economy was therefore "a science of fraudulent enrichment", tarred with the criminality of the business operations it lauded. Ricardo and his disciples had gone even further, defending the expansion of machinism and the factory system which, under capitalism, were "despicably immoral" both in the working conditions they imposed and the unemployment and poverty they created. As for Malthus, here was "the immorality of the economist brought to its highest pitch". He denounced Malthus' blend of population theory and classical economics as a hypocritical attempt to justify starvation and misery. Relying on Archibald Alison's Principles of Population, he dismissed as nonsense the claim that Britain was overpopulated, suggesting that within ten years the country could produce enough corn to feed a population ten times as large. Malthusian pessimism was entirely unwarranted

27. Ibid, MEGA I, 7, pp. 380-381; MECW, 3, pp. 419-420.

since the productive power at the disposal of the human race was "immeasurable", and agricultural yields could be increased "ad infinitum" by the application of capital, labour and science". It was also ethically repugnant. The logic of Malthus' argument, he claimed, would lead one to consider charity a crime and to endorse the proposals of a pseudonymous pamphleteer, Marcus, for a state institution to painlessly destroy paupers' children. He concluded that Smith's theory of the 'invisible hand', Ricardo's defence of machinism, and Malthus' population theory were inter-linked facets of a single ideological system which deserved to be condemned as intellectually weak and morally reprehensible.²⁸

To his hostile analysis of English intellectual life Engels added a moral critique similar to that in his review of Carlyle's Past and Present. In industrial England, he asserted, man had been reduced to "profound degradation", his psyche and social relations permeated with selfishness. He focussed on four aspects of this 'dehumanisation'. Competition and private property, the basic principles of the economic system, presupposed that every individual pursued exclusively his own interests, which precluded him from living a truly 'moral' life in which he would subordinate his desires to the needs of others and the good of the whole

28. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, pp. 379-382 & 396-404; MECW, 3, pp. 418-421 & 436-443.

community. This egoistic individualism produced, in turn, an atomistic society in which everyone was isolated in "his crude solitariness", and in which even workers regarded each other antagonistically as rivals. In the third place, the separation between capital and labour had produced a fundamental cleavage in the human community; capitalist society was rapidly becoming a two-class society condemned to a perpetual war between workers and entrepreneurs, a conflict in which the mass of ordinary people were usually on the losing side. Finally, the combination of private property, the new factories, and the "fundamentally unhealthy" market system had produced a further divorce between those who eked out a miserable existence in abject poverty and those who wallowed in abundance.²⁹

For Engels, this extreme inequality epitomised the barbarousness of the British social system. Poverty and unemployment were, it seemed, economic necessities without which the society could not function. But if this were so, then callousness and inhumanity were built in to the system, which was why he denounced the entire society as fundamentally immoral. The basic trouble, he reiterated, was that English life -- intellectual, moral, and social -- was now thoroughly founded on commerce, and modern commerce, in which prices perpetually fluctuated and conditions of trade were

29. Ibid, MEGA 1, 2, pp. 402-404; MECW, 3, pp. 441-443.

chaotic, was inherently unstable. The commercial system was thus progressively destroying all that was fixed and permanent in social life, including traditional moral values. Capitalism, he concluded, obliterated intrinsic values since competition continually altered the "value-relationship" of things to one another. The stock-exchange, which he loathed from personal experience, represented the "culminating point" of capitalist immorality -- it was a whirlpool of speculation in which mankind was "demoted to a means of gratifying the avarice of the calculating or gambling [merchant]".³⁰

As well as inveighing against the English social system on general moral grounds, Engels specified in more concrete terms some of the things he disliked about industrial capitalism. We have already noticed his antipathy to modern trade, which he regarded as unpredictable and fraudulent. He hated the market system, characterising it as an "unhealthy" and inequalitarian method of commodity distribution. He viewed the system of production with equal distaste, denouncing the factory as a generator of slums and crime. But the worst feature of British capitalism was the lack of co-ordination between production and distribution. Fluctuations in supply and demand brought trade crises, he explained, and trade crises meant unemployment, poverty and

30. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, p. 395; EFCU, 3, p. 434.

starvation. They now appeared every five to seven years "as regularly as the comets" and "the great plagues of the past", bringing in their train "more misery and more immorality than the latter". He was certain this phenomenon was entirely avoidable, and charged the British entrepreneurs with callously abandoning their workers to the merciless mechanism of the market. Arguing that economic forces should be controlled rather than left to chance, he insisted that unemployment and poverty could be overcome, if only the moral energy to fight them existed. But he suspected that this energy was lacking in the decadent British upper and middle classes.³¹

Engels, as we have seen, judged classical political economy unethical, and wanted to put the science back on a humanitarian foundation. He had no truck with the fact/value distinction, which he thought an example of the casuistry into which the British empiricist tradition in philosophy had fallen, and dismissed as ludicrous Ricardo's claim to have created an objective, value-neutral science of economic behaviour. Ricardo's system, he was sure, reflected the values of British entrepreneurs, and he pointed out the way in which the Ricardians assumed without question the virtues of private property and free competition. By a 'science' of political economy, then, he meant a scholarly investigation that was thorough, comprehensive, and penetrating, i.e.,

31. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, pp. 394-395; MECW, 3, pp. 433-434.

an analysis which would dig down to the roots of observed phenomena and explain the underlying forces at work, thus rendering them accessible to human control. This inquiry would, he assumed, have to be conducted from a 'point of view', and in that sense would presuppose moral values. Since he now regarded socialism as the only morally defensible philosophy, it followed that an ethical economic theory would have to be a socialist one. So he could call for a socialist science of political economy without feeling any tension between the terms 'socialist' and 'science'.³²

He made no pretence, in "Outlines of a Critique", that he had fully elaborated this science, but he did set out his ideas on several standard topics of economic theory. He had, therefore, already become a socialist economist of sorts by the end of 1843. We lack evidence to be sure whence he obtained his ideas, but prima facie he combined his own reflections on Smith, Say, Ricardo, Mill and McCulloch with doctrines which he found in Fourier, Proudhon, Owen, and possibly neo-Ricardian socialists like John Bray. It seems unlikely that he had read much by the neo-Ricardians at this time, since he mentioned none of them by name, but on the other hand he did refer vaguely to some work already done by English socialist writers on economic problems. So it is possible, though by no means certain, that he had gone beyond Owen's books and his followers' pamphlets. Given his

32. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, p. 382; MECW, 3, p. 421.

enthusiasm for Fourier during these months, it is more than feasible that his critique of classical economics leaned heavily on Fourier's diatribes against commercial capitalism, and indeed he mentioned Fourier in the article. But he did not, on this occasion, praise the Frenchman for his economic insights, so he may still have been interested primarily in Fourier's social vision. I suspect, in fact, that Engels took few economic doctrines from other socialist theorists, that the intellectual influences on him at this point were general rather than specific, and that the "Outlines" was one of the most original pieces he ever wrote. In terms of economic content it went far beyond anything achieved at the time by the Young Hegelians in Paris, although not, of course, beyond the work of Sismondi, Considerant and Proudhon in France or Thompson, Gray, Hodgskin and Bray in England.

Engels had a solid grasp of the main writings of Smith, Say and Ricardo, and his brief discussion of classical doctrines went to the heart of the most important debates between rival proponents of liberal economics. For example, he discussed the Ricardo/Say controversy over how to clarify Smith's theory of 'value', and also the crucial issue of how 'values' related to 'prices'. He criticised the Ricardian theory of value, according to which production costs determined 'abstract value', on the grounds that Say had correctly insisted that competition and utility had also to be taken into account as determining factors. But in Engels' opinion

Say's own theory was inadequate because too subjective, so he advanced instead his own definition of value: "the relation of production costs to utility". Once he had established this criterion of 'real value', he felt confident enough to offer in addition a theory of price. Competition being anarchic and irrational, he claimed, price movements were dependent on the chance interactions of supply and demand, so that there was normally an unfortunate divergence between 'real value' and price. An explanation of price levels and price movements would therefore have to take into account both the determinants of value and the effects of competition. Of these two major components, the former was primary, and prices should be understood as short-term variations around a level set by the 'real value' of a commodity (determined by its utility and production cost). The English political economists had failed to realise this relationship, he claimed, and had mystified reality by getting price and value the wrong way round. This, thought Engels, showed the applicability of Feuerbach's method of "transformative criticism" to liberal economics. He remarked that "everything in [classical] economics stands on its head. Value, the primary factor, the source of price, is made dependent on price, its own product".³³

Engels similarly criticised Smith's and Ricardo's theories of ground-rent, and then sketched his own version

33. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, pp. 385-388; MECW, 3, pp. 424-427.

which, he thought, combined the best points of both. Rent, he argued, reflected both the productivity of the land (which in turn depended on both natural fertility and labour applied to improve yields), and the market situation of supply and demand. But however it was determined in practice, he was convinced that ground-rent was a form of robbery, a means whereby landowners not only parasitically received unearned income (which raised prices), but also cashed in on the improvements effected by their tenants. Private ownership and capitalist exploitation of land, he asserted, were both immoral forms of "huckstering" which could only be ended by the abolition of private property. Following Proudhon, he argued that the standard arguments advanced in defence of private property -- such as 'each has the right to the product of his labour' -- could equally be advanced against the institution, and that all hereditary claims to landed property were ultimately founded on the assumption that common property rights had been divided up among individual families, an assumption which could equally well justify a repartition among all contemporary land-users. "Thus", he concluded, "wherever we turn, private property leads us into contradictions", and it was best to jettison it as outmoded and irrational.³⁴

Another favourite topic of the English political economists broached by Engels was that of monopoly versus

34. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, pp. 389-393; MECW, 3, pp. 428-432.

competition. Notwithstanding the furious intellectual battles which had been waged between pro-monopoly Mercantilists and anti-monopoly liberals, he argued, the whole issue was a pseudo-problem, or, to use his phrase, a "hollow antithesis". Using a favourite argument of Considerant's, he declared that all competitors were striving to defeat their rivals and set up monopolies, so competition naturally bred monopoly; also, any lucrative monopoly would attract entrepreneurs trying to take a share in the killings, so monopoly naturally bred competition. Moreover, capitalist competition already presupposed an oligopoly of property-owners who were concentrating more and more wealth and land in their own hands. Since capitalism was thus based on a quasi-monopoly and also naturally created monopolies in various branches of trade and industry, it was hypocritical of its spokesmen to pose as champions of free competition. He concluded, then, that the liberal campaign was a form of "mystification" similar to the classical theory of value/price.³⁵

Engels also criticised the classical economists for worshipping the law of supply and demand. The problem with the free market was that while demand and supply were always tending to reach equilibrium, in practice they never did. "Supply", he asserted, "always follows close on demand without

35. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, p. 393; MECW, 3, pp. 432-433.

ever quite covering it. It is either too big or too small... So it goes on unendingly -- a permanently unhealthy state of affairs -- a constant alternation of over-stimulation and flagging which precludes all advance -- a state of perpetual fluctuation without ever reaching its goal". The liberals (he was thinking especially of Say) had glorified this unsatisfactory state of affairs as a beneficent 'law of nature', claiming that it was an automatic mechanism which would prevent over-production crises. Drawing for his evidence on John Wade's History of the Middle and Working Classes (1833), he maintained that the British economy had unfortunately refused to conform to liberal theory, and that the last eighty years had witnessed a regular five-to-seven-year trade cycle of booms and slumps.³⁶

Engels' explanation of economic crises was not quite the underconsumptionist one he had found in the Fourierists and Proudhon. Overproduction vis-à-vis effective demand indicated, he suggested, a disequilibrium in the economy due to the blind irrationality of unplanned production for a market of unknown size. He was not arguing that a capitalist economy necessarily produced more than its consumers could buy, (which, for example, Proudhon and Considerant both maintained), but rather that it often did this by chance. Yet underconsumptionist theory seems to have had some impact on his thinking, because he argued that trade crises were

36. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, p. 394; MECW, 3, p. 433. John Wade, History of the Middle and Working Classes, London, Effingham & Wilson, 1833.

bound to get progressively worse, impoverishing more and more small businessmen and enlarging the numbers of poverty-stricken wage-labourers. Eventually, he claimed, this cyclical process would reach such a level of intensity that it would be intolerable, and a social revolution would break out. Engels thus proposed, in the "Outlines", a crude theory of future proletarian revolution as the result of worsening economic conditions. It was not an economic 'breakdown' theory as such, i.e., he did not explicitly predict that the capitalist economy would, as a result of its internal 'laws' or 'contradictions', ultimately be unable to function further. But it did appear to suppose a deterministic relationship between increasing unemployment and political insurrection. Clearly Engels had as yet given little thought to the details of his theory, but he did want to argue that (a) periodic crises were inherent in a capitalist economy, (b) they would get progressively more severe and extensive, and (c) they would eventually provoke a working-class seizure of power, and a transformation of the socio-economic system.³⁷

In line with this theory of an enlarging labour force and worsening trade crises, Engels adopted, presumably from Ricardo, a doctrine of subsistence wages. Rising real incomes were in the long run impossible for the mass of wage-labourers, he concluded, given the likelihood of a vast pool

37. Ibid, MEGA 1, 2, pp. 394-396; MECW, 3, pp. 433-436.

of unemployed which might ebb and flow but which would never dry up, and given, too, the unequal balance of power between capitalists and proletariat. Technological change would not, under capitalism, work in favour of the lower classes: it would merely extend the factory system, replace labour-power by machines (thus exacerbating unemployment), and destroy more traditional crafts, rendering previously skilled workers unemployable. He was particularly interested in the effect of scientific inventions on the labour force. In the early phases of the English Industrial Revolution, he explained, there had been an excess of demand for labour over supply, a fact which had stimulated the invention of Hargreaves', Crompton's and Arkwright's cotton-spinning machines. The last great innovation in the textile industry, the self-acting mule, had been a response to rising wages -- it had cut the labour requirements of cotton mills by half, and thereby "destroyed the last vestige of strength with which labour had still held out in the unequal struggle against capital". In the past, then, the introduction of machines had scarcely benefited the textile workers.³⁸ How about the future? He was familiar with Say's argument that in the long term machinery would be favourable to the workers since it would cheapen production and thereby create a larger market for its products, thus eventually re-employing more

38. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, pp. 403-404; MECU, 3, pp. 442-443.

operatives than were initially put out of work. In theory this was true enough, Engels replied, but it neglected two crucial considerations. One was the fact that a pool of unemployed kept wage rates low even when more employment opportunities were created, and the periodic laying-off of large segments of the labour force also allowed ruthless wage-cutting. The second was the continuous nature of technological innovation: workers were repeatedly being subjected to sudden unemployment or drastic wage-cuts, which meant their existence was unstable and precarious, with no guarantee either that their jobs would be permanent or that their skills would remain marketable. This lack of security, he pointed out, was especially disturbing to the adult worker with a family to maintain but too old to readily learn a new skill. Since these were well-known consequences of machinism under capitalism, he concluded, it was despicable of entrepreneurs to instal new machines while making no attempt to compensate the victims.³⁹

What could be done to counteract evils like subsistence wages, mass unemployment, and trade crises? To Engels' mind there was only one -- double-barrelled -- answer: abolition of private property (the fundamental cause of inequality), and abandonment of unregulated competition (the fundamental cause of unemployment). Production would have to be planned so that the supply of commodities corresponded to the

39. Ibid.

real needs of consumers. Drawing on Owen and Fourier, he explained how the communist economy of the future would operate:

The community will have to calculate what it can produce with the means at its disposal; and in accordance with the relationship of this productive power to the mass of consumers it will determine how far it has to raise or lower production, how far it has to give way to, or curtail, luxury.⁴⁰

There were two ways, apart from the absence of private property, in which this economy would differ from a capitalist one: a rationally planned use of resources would increase the productive power of men and machines, and cut-throat competition would be replaced by a "spirit of emulation grounded in human nature", a concept which, Engels commented, only Fourier had so far "tolerably set forth".

The influence of Fourierism on Engels' conception of what might ultimately be possible under communism was thus substantial. He endorsed Fourier's general view of human nature, his notion of a free community, and his ideas on 'free labour'. But he combined this Fourierist vision of a co-operative association in which work was voluntary and joyous with Owen's conviction that an industrial commune would be able to take full advantage of new technology to reduce working hours and raise living standards. He had a tremendous admiration for science and engineering, lavishing praise on the beneficial effects of the work of scientists like Davy,

40. Ibid, MEGA 1, 2, p. 394; ibid, 1, 1. 415.

Berthollet and Liebig, and practical inventions like Watt's steam engine. If managed correctly, he believed, the new industrial technology could revolutionise the quality of life and usher in an era of rapid social advance. He combined this faith in technology with the optimistic philosophy of history he had learned from Condorcet and Hegel. Even the capitalist system represented a step forward, he insisted: it was a link in the "chain of mankind's universal progress". By dissolving all sectional interests, laissez-faire capitalism had paved the way for the "great transformation" towards which industrial society was moving -- the communist "reconciliation of mankind with nature and with itself".⁴¹ Engels thus still retained his old Romantic ideal of an organic social community. He had now not only equated it with 'communism' but had also, in his own mind, harnessed industrial technology as the means of creating it on earth.

When Engels had sent off both his Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher articles to Paris (he completed them by January 1844), he set to work on a major new project: a large-scale social history of the British Industrial Revolution. This he was never to complete, although it bore fruit in some articles he published in Paris that summer, and in The Condition of the Working Class in England, which appeared in Germany the next year. He spent most of his spare time in the spring and summer of 1844 visiting English industrial

41. Ibid, MEGA I, 2, p. 385; MECW, 3, p. 424.

towns and pouring over government and newspaper reports on lower-class working and living conditions. In the process he gained a better idea of the variety of manufacturing trades and some sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the labour movement.

His new awareness of trade-unionism and of the importance of strikes as a bargaining weapon was evident in some short columns he wrote on current events in Germany, France and Switzerland for the Chartist newspaper, The Northern Star.⁴² Two episodes on the continent especially caught his eye: the Silesian weavers' uprising, and a miners' strike near Lyon. He interpreted the Silesian affair as a protest against "competition, machinery, and greedy manufacturers", and concluded that the consequences of the factory system were the same in Germany as in England: "oppression and toil for the many, riches and wealth for the few; insecurity of fortune, discontent, and riot exist among the hills of Silesia, as well as in the crowded cities of Lancashire and Yorkshire". The Silesian weavers, then, were the German equivalents of the English hand-loom weavers -- one of the most tragic victims of the new textile technology.⁴³ He

42. Eleven articles published in The Northern Star between 4/5/44 and 29/6/44; MECW, 3, pp. 514-534. Cf., Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England, Leipzig, Wigand, 1845; MEGA I, 4, pp. 3-286; MECW, 4, pp. 295-583.

43. "News From Prussia", The Northern Star, no. 346, 29/6/44, and "Further Particulars of the Silesian Riots", The Northern Star, no. 346, 29/6/44; MECW, 3, pp. 530-534.

assumed that the striking Lyon miners, whose six-week endurance test he also reported, were the French equivalents of the English trade-union militants he was beginning to make contact with through Watts and The Northern Star. He also surmised from reading the French press that the labour movement and the Republican party were growing rapidly in strength in Paris and in the French industrial towns.⁴⁴ All in all, it looked to Engels as though social and political change on the British pattern was imminent in Germany, and, especially, in France. For France he predicted the "certainty of a speedy revolution", and eagerly looked forward to visiting Paris when his apprenticeship in Manchester terminated in August 1844.⁴⁵

44. "News from France", The Northern Star, no. 341, / / 44; HECU, 3, pp. 527-529.

45. Ibid, loc. cit., n. 527.

CHAPTER 6

MARX IN PARIS, 1844

Once Marx had sent off the proofs of the first issue of the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher to Switzerland for printing, he settled down to study the course of the French Revolution in more detail, to investigate further the views of French socialists, and to find out more about the French urban lower classes. In his historical studies he concentrated on the Jacobins and sans-culottes, reading the press of the Revolutionary period and going through documentary material like the four-volume memoir by the Jacobin devotee, R. Levasseur.¹ He became familiar with the arguments of the extreme left in the revolutionary Commune, including Jacques Roux, the spokesman for the enragés. Conversations with his new acquaintances Pierre Leroux (an ex-Saint-Simonian), and the poet Heine (who had been attracted to the Saint-Simonian movement while living in Paris in the 1830s), led him to skim through a file of Le Globe and read Bazard's Doctrine de Saint-Simon: Exposition, Première Année, 1829, the most

1. René Levasseur, Mémoires de R. Levasseur (de la Commune) (ed. Achille Roche), 4 vols, Paris, Rapilly, 1829-31. Marx's extensive notes on and extracts from this work, to which he gave the general title "Kampf der Montagnards und Girondins", are in MEGA I, 3, pp. 417-434; MECW, 3, pp. 361-374.

accessible account of Saint-Simonian doctrine.² His Parisian friends also encouraged his new interest in working-class living standards and working conditions by bringing to his notice Eugène Buret's De la misère des classes laborieuses en Angleterre et en France (Paris, 1840), an eye-witness survey of the urban poverty accompanying industrialisation.³ Even more than Bazard's, Buret's book had a substantial influence on Marx's thinking during the spring and summer of 1844.

Marx also took the opportunity to study working-class life in Paris at first-hand. He attended social evenings and educational meetings organised by the more militant German artisans living and working in Paris. Finding the views of Weitling highly regarded by some of these artisans, he now read Weitling's Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit more sympathetically, going so far as to pronounce it "brilliant" and rate its author a socialist theorist of the same calibre as Proudhon.⁴ He made contact too with the small Russian

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2. Doctrine de Saint-Simon: Exposition, Première Année, 1829 (lectures given by Amand Bazard et al), Paris, L'Organisateur, 1830. English translation, The Doctrine of Saint-Simon (ed. George Iggers), N.Y., Schocken, 1972.
 3. Eugène Buret, De la misère des classes laborieuses en Angleterre et en France, 2 vols, Paris, Paulin, 1840.
 4. Wilhelm Weitling, Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit, Vivis, 1842; 2nd edit., Hamburg, Verlag des Verfassers, 1849. Marx, "Kritische Randglossen zu dem Artikel: 'Der König von Preussen und die Sozialreform. Von einem Preussen' (Vorwärts, n. 60)", Vorwärts, nos. 63 & 64, 7 & 10/8/44; MEGA I, 3, n. 18; MEGA, 3, n. 241.

émigré circle in Paris (which included Bakunin), and he, Hess, and Bakunin together frequented cafés in working-class districts in order to converse with French 'proletarians' about politics and the need for social reform. Since the French economy was depressed in these years and Parisian unemployment high, Marx and his friends had little difficulty in finding workless artisans ready to denounce the rich who enjoyed luxury while workers' families starved in their thousands, and to condemn the economic system which created such extremes of affluence and poverty. He no doubt discovered fairly wide-spread support among Parisian artisans for Louis Blanc's slogan "the right to work" and schemes for state-aided producers' associations eventually to be run by the workers themselves. He probably also discovered some sympathy for Cabet's more visionary scheme for a communist society in which private property and competition would be abolished, since Le Populaire had a small Parisian working-class circulation even though the Icarian movement was stronger in the industrial towns of the south.⁵ Through personal observation, conversation and reading, Marx thus deepened his knowledge of the Parisian working-class and French socialism in the spring of 1844.

Proudhon remained his favourite French socialist writer, although he judged Qu'est-ce que la propriété? much

5. On Cabet and Icarianism, see Christopher H. Johnson, Utopian Communism in France: Cabet and the Icarians, 1839-1851, Ithaca, Cornell U.P., 1974.

superior to the other books Proudhon had published to date. Proudhon, in fact, visited Paris in February/March 1844, and since he was a friend of Blanc and Leroux it is possible that he and Marx met for the first time -- we possess no evidence for this, however, so it remains conjectural. But Marx almost certainly reread the first mémoire on property at this time, since Proudhon's ideas were in the front of his mind when he wrote the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts later in the summer. In his desire to familiarise himself with the activities and ideas of the French left, he probably read La Réforme, Démocratie pacifique, and Le Populaire on a fairly regular basis, without fully subscribing to the ideology of any of these groups. Politically he agreed with Blanc's and La Réforme's democratic republicanism, but he now accepted Leroux's criticism that the 'red republicans' put too much emphasis on political revolution and underestimated the degree of social transformation which would be required to eradicate poverty and inequality. He was still unsympathetic to Icarianism, which he thought at once too draconian and too impractical. He was attracted to Fourierism in some ways -- in particular the Fourierist view of human nature and attitude to work -- but was put off by the movement's predominantly agrarian orientation and middle-class following; moreover, he still apparently knew Fourier only through the writings of disciples like Pompery and Considerant -- despite one reference to Fourier himself in the Paris Manuscripts,

it is almost certain that Marx did not begin reading his books, (as opposed to the odd short text published in the Fourierist press), before the fall of 1844. Still, despite his reservations, he was interested in Fourierism, and some influence on his thought can be detected in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts even though he had not been won over to Fourier's phalansterian solution to the social problem in the summer of 1844.⁶

We have seen how Marx learnt from Blanc, Leroux and Considerant in the last months of 1843 that the general problem of the 'dehumanisation' of modern European man had its roots in the economic structure upon which 'civil society' was built. Once convinced of this, he quickly saw the need to understand better the nature of European capitalism, and added economic theory to his list of study topics. Louis Blanc, asked to indicate the best book on economics, probably suggested Marx should read his own favourite socialist economist, Constantin Pecqueur. So the young German plodded through the 900 pages of Pecqueur's Théorie nouvelle d'économie sociale et politique (Paris, 1842), discounting the Christian rhetoric with which it was lavishly padded but assimilating a moral perspective on economic problems which he was never

6. Marx, "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahr 1844" ("Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, 1844"), MEGA I, 3, pp. 28-172 (Fourier reference, p. 111); MECW, 3, pp. 229-346 (Fourier reference, p. 294).

entirely to lose.⁷ He also found some material on economic questions in Bazard's Exposition and in Enfantin's articles in Le Globe, which were reprinted in book form as Economie politique et politique Saint-Simonienne (Paris, 1831).⁸ Pecqueur, Enfantin and Bazard led him in turn to the Physiocrats, Adam Smith, and later French and English political economists. Bazard, for example, mentioned in his Exposition the ideas of Quesnay, Destutt de Tracy, Say, Sismondi, Malthus, and Ricardo, and Marx followed up all these references in the next few months. Indeed, in the summer of 1844 he seems to have largely abandoned his study of French history and French socialist theory (apart from the work of socialist economists) in order to concentrate on political economy. He read fairly extensively in the subject, making copious extracts in his notebooks from French translations of the leading British liberal economists as well as French and German authors.

Which economists did Marx read before writing the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts? Quite a long list can be established on the evidence of his notebooks and references in the Manuscripts. The English (and Scottish) political economists with whom he was to some extent familiar were Adam Smith, John Law, John Marshall, Thomas Malthus,

7. Constantin Pecqueur, Théorie nouvelle d'économie sociale et politique, Paris, Capelle, 1842.

8. Prosper Enfantin, Economie politique et politique Saint-Simonienne, Paris, Le Globe, 1831.

James Lauderdale, David Ricardo, John McCulloch, and James Mill, and of these he seems to have studied Smith and Mill most thoroughly. He had read the following French writers on economic issues: Pierre de Boisguillebert, Charles Ganilh, Antoine Destutt de Tracy, François Quesnay, Michel Chevalier, Jean-Simonde de Sismondi, Frédéric Skarbek, Jean-Baptiste Say, and the socialists Proudhon, Buret, and Pecqueur. The extent to which he had studied the works of these authors differed considerably though: he had taken extensive notes on Say's Traité d'économie politique, and had looked at selections from three of Boisguillebert's books, whereas his notes on Destutt de Tracy, Buret, and Skarbek were briefer.⁹ Although no notes on Proudhon and Pecqueur are extant, it is obvious from the Paris Manuscripts that Marx knew their main works fairly thoroughly, and he also went carefully through the extended 'Introduction' to Buret's De la misère, skimming the rest of the work but stopping at sections which particularly interested him.¹⁰ The other French writers listed above he knew only sketchily -- indeed it is probable that he knew of Sismondi only through Buret's book in which Sismondi was praised and quoted (quotations from Sismondi in the Economic and Philosophical Manu-

9. Marx, "Exzerpthefte aus Paris, 1844-45", MEGA I, 3, pp. 411-416 & 437-583; "Oekonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte...", loc. cit., passim.

10. Buret, op.cit.; Marx "Oekonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte...", MEGA I, 3, pp. 50-51; MECW, 3, pp. 244-245.

scripts are all passages found in Buret).¹¹ His favourite German-language economists were Friedrich Engels (whose "Outlines" in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher he made notes on), and Wilhelm Schulz, whose Die Bewegung der Produktion he quoted quite extensively in the Paris Manuscripts.¹² Schulz was actually Swiss, and appears to have been a disciple of Sismondi, interested in the growth of large-scale factory enterprises and their effect on small business. Engels, as we have seen, was influenced by Fourier, Proudhon, and Owen, but had to a large degree worked out his own ideas on political economy as the result of a hostile reading of the English liberal economists. His views evidently played a considerable role in both introducing Marx to economic analysis and guiding his response to liberal political economy. Other German economists read by Marx were Friedrich List, H.F. Oslander, and C.W.C. Schütz, but he does not appear to have derived a great deal from their books.¹³

For Marx in the summer of 1844, the discipline of political economy was divided into two schools: that of the English and French liberals (to whom he sometimes referred as "the political economists"), and that of a looser group of

11. "Oekonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte...", MEGA I, 3, p. 63; MECW, 3, p. 257.

12. Wilhelm Schulz, Die Bewegung der Produktion, eine geschichtlich statistische Handlung, Zürich und Winterthur, 1843. Marx, "Oekonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte...", MEGA I, 3, pp. 47-49, 61-62 & 65; MECW, 3, pp. 242, 254 & 258.

13. "Exzerptheft aus Paris", MEGA I, 3, pp. 411-416.

socialist and semi-socialist critics who usually argued the need for a broader kind of discipline embracing social questions as well as narrowly economic ones. The liberal economists he knew best were Smith, Say, and Mill; he did make some notes from Ricardo's Principles of Political Economy and Taxation sometime in the summer but had apparently not 'digested' his views sufficiently to make use of them when writing the Manuscripts (in which the only quotations from Ricardo were second-hand, also via Buret's De la misère).¹⁴ The 'critics' he most admired were Proudhon, Pecqueur, Buret, Schulz and Engels. Although Marx had probably not yet read much (or even any) of Sismondi's own writings, his perspective on industrialisation and liberal economics was indirectly influenced by the so-called 'Italian school', since Proudhon, Schulz, Pecqueur, and especially Buret were all indebted to Sismondi's analysis of the problems of industrial capitalism and his polemic against 'classical' English political economy.

In the notes, manuscripts and articles he penned during the summer of 1844 Marx referred to seven French socialists: Cabet, Fourier, Proudhon, Saint-Simon, Pecqueur, Buret, and Sismondi. Some of these allusions were slight, or somewhat misleading. For example, although he once mentioned Saint-Simon by name and did not cite either Bazard or

14. "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte...", MEGA I, 3, p. 63; MECW, 3, p. 246. Both this and the following Sismondi quotation were taken from Buret, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 6-7.

Enfantin, it is most probable that he had not yet read anything by Saint-Simon himself but had to some degree familiarised himself with Saint-Simonian doctrine of the late 1820s and early 1830s. The distinction is significant, because there was a substantial difference in general tone and specific doctrines between Saint-Simon and his self-proclaimed disciples -- broadly speaking, Saint-Simon was an Enlightenment figure, imbued with a positivistic desire for a new science of social behaviour, and in most of his writings (except his last) sympathetic to entrepreneurs and liberal economics, whereas the Saint-Simonians were Romantics, seeking above all a new religion and morality upon which to build an 'organic' community strong enough to withstand the corrosive force of 'laissez-faire' capitalism. Marx, in the early summer of 1844, had barely begun to feel the intellectual attraction of positivism, while on the other hand, despite his antipathy to the Saint-Simonians' religiosity, he sympathised with their yearning for a society based on 'universal association'. It is not surprising, therefore, that he at first found the disciples more attractive and intriguing than the master.¹⁵

Similarly, although Marx did refer to Fourier by name on one occasion in the Paris Manuscripts, it appears he was

15. On Saint-Simon, see Frank E. Manuel, The New World of Henri Saint-Simon, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard U.P., 1950; on the Saint-Simonians, see Sebastien Charloty, Histoire du Saint-Simonisme, Paris, Hartmann, 1931.

as yet familiar only with contemporary Fourierism. And, as we have seen, he probably knew Sismondi's writings only through extracts in Buret's De la misère. Again, the influence of Icarianism on Marx was at this time meagre -- he mentioned Cabet only once in the Manuscripts, and, though he was now becoming more sympathetic to the French utopian communist tradition as a whole, his remarks on the Icarian leader were critical and made in a supercilious tone.¹⁶ In short, in composing the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts Marx did not draw upon a close reading of Fourier, Cabet, Sismondi or Saint-Simon, just as he did not, at this point, possess a firm grasp of Ricardo's work. But he did make use, consciously or unconsciously, of his knowledge of Proudhon, Buret, Pecqueur, and the Saint-Simonians. He was to rethink his overall attitude to Proudhon's book on property in the fall, and mainly dipped into the work for discussions of specific points (like wages or credit) while writing the Manuscripts, so I shall leave aside for the moment his reassessment of Proudhon's contribution to socialist theory and political economy. Of the seven French socialists listed above we are thus left with only Buret and Pecqueur as major influences on the Paris Manuscripts, to whom must be added the Saint-Simonians. Before analysing the Manuscripts, I shall therefore describe briefly what Marx found in their writings,

16. "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte...", MEGA I, 3, p. 114; MECW, 3, p. 297.

and discuss his notebooks and the one important article he wrote this summer.

Four main themes were of special importance to Marx in Saint-Simonian ideology: the Saint-Simonians' theory of the historical development of human society, their analysis of the roles played by the opposing forces of 'antagonism' and 'association' in this spasmodic progression, their critique of contemporary industrial society, and their positive proposals for social reconstruction.¹⁷

Saint-Simon, argued Bazard and Enfantin, had discovered the evolutionary law governing the history of mankind, and also the key to the future perfectibility of the human species. He had made history a 'science', providing a "successive table" of the stages through which the human race had evolved, and pointing out that this involved an oscillation between two distinctive types of historical era: 'critical epochs' and 'organic epochs' (the latter being times when previous gains were consolidated and society had reached an equilibrium, while the former were centuries during which one form of social organisation disintegrated and another was prepared in embryo). Applying this schema to contemporary Europe, the Saint-Simonians suggested that their society was on the brink of emerging from a long 'critical epoch' which had been in existence since the sixteenth century -- it was

17. The following exposition of Saint-Simonian ideas is based primarily on the Doctrine, op. cit., but also on Enfantin's Economie politique, op. cit.

time, they thought, to create a new 'organic epoch', and they claimed to have discerned the fundamental principle upon which a new 'organic' civilisation could and should be built.

The key to the future was 'universal association'; this was the goal of history, and the course of past history was best understood as a continual conflict between two great forces, one positive and one negative: 'association' and 'antagonism'. The conflict was by no means over, but to the Saint-Simonians it was evident that whereas man had started out, long before the rise of classical antiquity, in a state of thorough 'antagonism' (i.e., constant warfare and a society based on slavery), the opposing forces of harmony, order and equality had increasingly asserted themselves, periodically creating relatively stable social orders (in ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, and medieval Christendom) which relied less and less on naked force as a social cement. History was thus for Bazard and Enfantin the story of the exploitation of men by rich and powerful élites, but over the centuries this exploitation had declined in intensity, passing through the stages of slavery, 'plebianism', serfdom, and wage-labour. European civilisation was now ripe for a fifth stage in which 'antagonism' would be completely defeated and the principle of 'association' would at last come fully into its own. Exploitation and social warfare would then cease, and a unified, egalitarian, and stable social

order would be constructed, appropriate to the new 'organic epoch'.

Although it was overtly teleological, the Saint-Simonians did not regard their theory of history as 'inevitable'. The future could be predicted in general terms only, they maintained, and progress would only occur if men recognised and undertook their historical tasks. Since the French Revolution, which had completed the destructive work of the last 'critical epoch', Europe had been ready to advance to a new socialist society, but few men had as yet perceived the truth of Saint-Simon's gospel and taken up the challenge of social reconstruction. In his Exposition, Bazard explicitly repudiated a deterministic interpretation of his theory, and launched into an attack on historical fatalism and a critique of the positivistic assumptions of August Comte's rival stage-theory of historical progress. The Saint-Simonian view of the evolution of human society, notwithstanding its roots in Enlightenment scientism, was thus a conscious attempt to portray history as progressive but non-linear, non-determined, and as much the product of human conflict as the growth of skill and knowledge. If, in its broad sweep and notion of human perfectibility, it retained some affinities with Condorcet's vision, it was a more subtle view which also took into account Rousseau's insight that the last few centuries had witnessed a disintegration of a simpler social fabric and the growth of inequality, hatred and injustice.

In short, it was a blend of Enlightenment and Romantic social thought likely to fit in well with Marx's own fusion of these two intellectual traditions.¹⁸

Although the Saint-Simonians believed that the two main aspects of 'antagonism' (physical force and 'exploitation') had declined in importance since the Middle Ages, they stressed the continued prevalence of both in modern Europe. Force, announced Bazard, was manifest in government, legislation, and sexual relations in particular, while the employer/employee relationship was founded on exploitation, albeit in an attenuated form. This exploitation, and the continued reliance of government on coercion to enforce inegalitarian social relations (within the family, and between owners and non-owners of property), divided society into two opposing camps: producers and non-producers, exploited and exploiters, governed and rulers.¹⁹ Modern Europe was thus for the Saint-Simonians very far from their ideal of a harmonious, stable, peaceful social order based on 'universal association' -- on the contrary, it was rent by tension, hatred, and social conflict between the "most numerous class" and the idle rich. Marx had probably already picked up from Leroux the doctrine of class conflict as the most fundamental force in modern history, but if not then he certainly found the idea set out forcefully in Bazard's Exposition. Most likely

18. Doctrine (English trans.), op. cit., pp. 1-89.

19. Ibid, p. 83.

his reading of the Saint-Simonians reinforced his conviction that the urban workers were a class apart, whose eventual liberation would usher in a new harmonious and egalitarian society based on co-operation rather than class-conflict.

A third Saint-Simonian theme which appealed to Marx was their economic critique of current industrial society. Although commercial capitalism had broken down traditional social relations, argued Bazard, it had merely substituted one idle, parasitic class for another. The new capitalist élites had no right to own French industry, so they should be regarded as no more than 'trustees' of the instruments of production, entrusted with the task of distributing them efficiently to workers and supervising the mix of goods produced to ensure that it satisfied consumers' requirements. If this was the task French businessmen had tacitly undertaken for their society, how well had they performed it? "Very poorly", answered Bazard and Enfantin. Not only had they taken advantage of their monopoly to live in luxury while their workers barely eked out a subsistence living, they had also utterly failed to provide planned production and match supply and demand in the economy. Capitalism left everything to chance, the result of chance was anarchy, and the result of anarchy was a series of economic crises. Bazard sketched in the Exposition a general theory of recurrent industrial 'catastrophes' caused by unlimited and unregulated competition. By giving competition free reign, he claimed, the business elite (and the politicians who supported it) had

unleashed social war, perverted traditional morality, and exacerbated the problem of property.

Like Proudhon, the Saint-Simonians saw in the accumulation of property in few hands the main source of social injustice. They attacked private property intransigently, denouncing it as the material support of the idle élite, and proposing that the state should confiscate (in the form of death duties) all large concentrations of privately-owned land and realty. Regarding inheritance as the mechanism which perpetuated social inequality, they believed that by banning it they could gradually overcome the skewed distribution of wealth between classes and abolish the "hereditary misery" of the mass of workers. In short, by accumulating property and maximising profits, the French entrepreneurs had made use of the 'laissez-faire' economy to feather their own nests, but had completely neglected their social responsibilities. Free-market capitalism had failed to solve the crucial problem of the 'organisation of work' -- it had merely intensified social divisions, and promulgated a retrograde morality founded on self-interest which hindered the progress of 'universal association'.²⁰

Bazard and Enfantin thus had little favourable to say about the practical achievements of industrial capitalism, and they had even less time for economic liberalism as a social doctrine. Classing together the authors of the

20. Ibid, pp. 90-137.

Encyclopédie, the Physiocrats, Say, Malthus, and Ricardo as all, in different ways, spokesmen for private property and commercial capitalism, Bazard mocked the inadequacy of their theories, claiming that no eighteenth or nineteenth century jurist, political theorist or economist had been able to come up with a persuasive general justification for private property. Sismondi was the only political economist he respected; the liberals he wrote off as third-rate apologists for a decadent society, men who defended reactionary vested interests, encouraged a reprehensible system of values, and neglected the moral education of the people.

This was the negative, critical side of Saint-Simonian social and economic doctrine. Marx was also interested in the positive proposals of Bazard and his supporters on how to create a new 'organic' society. Here he found the Saint-Simonians had less to offer. They proclaimed the need for a new social doctrine derived from the writings of Saint-Simon and centred around their ideal of 'universal association'. One aspect of this new 'social science' was the theory of history which I have already described. Another was their attempt to predict some of the general features of the forthcoming 'organic epoch' -- a time when there would be peace, equality, unity, order, harmony, and an overcoming of the lamentable gap between progressive theory and governmental practice. A third was their reflections on the nature of knowledge and scientific discovery in the new epoch. The future 'scientist', they suggested, would be both a poet and

a rationalist, combining the fruits of the imagination with the certainties of empirical verification, and utilising the techniques of both analysis and synthesis in a manner which few intellectuals had so far achieved. This, although vague, was a laudable attempt to avoid the pitfalls of hard-line positivism on the one hand and self-indulgent, Romantic 'fantasy' on the other, and Marx found himself in general agreement with the programme. He had little sympathy, however, for the fourth aspect of 'positive' Saint-Simonian doctrine: the attempt to create a new, non-theological religion -- this, he judged, merely showed that Enfantin and his followers had failed to emancipate themselves fully from Christianity.

The Saint-Simonians seemed to Marx to have only two practical proposals on how to create a socialist community: the gradual destruction of private property through the abolition of inheritance, and the modernisation of the banking system so that it could be used as a lever through which to control the economy. These two measures, they believed, would be sufficient to allow the construction of a planned and centralised industrial economy in which all large-scale industry would be state-owned. It was a perspective which took into account the mechanisation and centralisation of modern factory production, but which gave the running of industry not to the workers themselves but to a group of specially trained managers endowed with a social conscience. They thus envisaged an even greater economic role for the

state than did Louis Blanc; on the other hand, they expected that the coercive, political function of the state would gradually fade away as the new social order came into being.²¹ Marx was intrigued by the proposed ban on property inheritance, sceptical of the financial panacea, and attracted by the Saint-Simonian vision of the future socialist state.

Although he had found sections on economic issues in books and pamphlets by Proudhon, Blanc, Leroux, Considerant and the Saint-Simonians, Constantin Pecqueur's Théorie nouvelle d'économie sociale was the first treatise on political economy by a French socialist that Marx studied.²² Pecqueur was ideologically rather eclectic. There was a Christian flavour to his system which linked him to Lamennais and Buchez, and his values and attitudes revealed a heavy debt to the Rousseau of the Discourse on Inequality. As an economist he was primarily a disciple of Sismondi, but in the 1830s had been temporarily attracted first to Saint-Simonianism, and later to Fourierism, breaking with the former as too elitist and with the latter as implicitly authoritarian. He had nevertheless been influenced by both these movements, and declared in the introduction to the Théorie nouvelle that while

21. Ibid, pp. 84-89, 103-109, & 137; Enfantin, Economie politique, op. cit., passim.

22. Pecqueur, Théorie nouvelle, op. cit. On Pecqueur, see Gerard Marcy, Constantin Pecqueur, fondateur du collectivisme d'état, Paris, Recueil Sirey, 1934; Jean-Pierre Ferrier, La pensée politique de Constantin Pecqueur, Paris, Librairie générale du droit et de jurisprudence, 1969; Ahmed Zouaoui, Socialisme et internationalisme: Constantin Pecqueur, Geneve, Droz, 1964.

the origins of socialist political economy were to be found in Rousseau, the major advances in the subject had been made by Fourier and the Saint-Simonians in the 1830s. By reading Pecqueur, Marx thus became indirectly familiar with several different strains of early French socialist thought.

The main things of interest to Marx in the Théorie nouvelle were Pecqueur's theory of history, his views on human nature and how this was reflected in human society, his programme for a new social science which would include a socialist political economy, his analysis of the social and economic problems of commercial capitalism, his opinions on alternative suggested methods of social reform, and his ideas on the socialist society of the future. I shall discuss these in turn.

Pecqueur believed in progress, claiming that men were capable of becoming not only more knowledgeable but also, within certain limits, morally better. He stressed the importance of education as the primary vehicle by which society could be -- and was being -- made more rational, just and free. Firmly convinced that human beings could remould themselves, their environment and their social institutions, he was a staunch believer in freewill. Progress occurred, he argued, only when men consciously revised their traditional beliefs and opinions. He thus emphasised the creativity of human thought and labour in a way that appealed to Marx, but as a professed social scientist he was aware that men also responded to external forces. Three main factors influenced

men to change their beliefs for the better, he explained: currents of ideas, natural forces they were unable to discount, and the volitions of other men. He elaborated an explanatory framework for social change which was causal, but which stopped short of being totally deterministic. In the last resort, he implied, men always chose -- or at least had the possibility of choosing -- the causal factors to which they would submit. In one sense, then, progress was not inevitable in Pecqueur's eyes, because (as he put it) men had the freewill to choose between good and evil, and need not necessarily opt for good (which he equated with "progress"). On the other hand, he was convinced that the human desire for progress was God-given, and came close at times to propounding a providential theory of inevitable progress reminiscent of Bossuet.

There was therefore a certain ambivalence in Pecqueur's work over the freewill/determinism issue and the question of historical inevitability. He sensed the methodological dangers inherent in a deterministic approach and also in a grand overview of the course of human history, and tried to avoid these by emphasising freewill and creativity, but without ever abandoning his desire to establish a causal/social 'science' and a grand 'philosophy' of history. Like Bazard, he argued against a too schematic or linear view of social evolution, pointing out that particular societies or races might temporarily regress, and that even where progress had occurred in a given society it was usually imperfect and

fragmentary. So if Pecqueur was still, at bottom, a disciple of Condorcet, his optimistic view of history was tempered with a strong dash of Rousseauian pessimism and a firmer grasp of the complexities of social change. Marx, who had begun his philosophical career as a categorical exponent of freewill but who had gradually (since his editorship of the Rheinische Zeitung) begun to recognise the power of social forces beyond the control of any individual, was highly sympathetic to Pecqueur's endeavour, and provisionally accepted the broad lines of his 'solution'. He agreed with Pecqueur's strictures against social scientists who viewed man purely as a 'law-governed' creature and with his warnings that error and sterility resulted from the historian ignoring human ideals and passions.²³

Pecqueur's interpretation of the nature of human society was consciously derived from his views on human character. Man at his best was, he claimed, a moral, religious, loving, sympathetic, intelligent, emotional, industrious, independent being who acted in accord with his values and ideals. Social laws and institutions, being man-made, were no more than a reflection of man, and so, if well-framed, would in no way hamper the expression of these good qualities. Unfortunately, he argued, (in this respect following Fourier), many contemporary institutions

23. Ibid, pp.207-209 & 237-238.

were in fact ill-adapted to human nature and thwarted the free and creative expression of human instincts. He singled out commercial capitalism as the major obstacle to a society in accord with 'true' human nature because it encouraged egoism while downplaying the human qualities of love, friendship and parental affection. He also, like Marx, saw in the doctrine of natural rights a disguised defence of possessive individualism. The only inextinguishable right, he asserted, was that to human solidarity -- other so-called rights like that of security of property were not absolute and should not be allowed to become barriers to human progress. In the interests of the general welfare a society had the right to alter its institutions; in any case, since human nature itself evolved it was reasonable that society too should change, and no individual or generation could then be permitted to lay down a fixed pattern to which these institutions must conform. Consequently, he concluded, 'les générations présentes et les futures ont le devoir et le droit de détruire, le plus pacifiquement et le plus économiquement possible, tout ce que les générations passées ont édifié d'institutions contraires au but de solidarité, d'égalité et de liberté'.²⁴

There was a blatant contradiction, of which he was apparently unaware, in Pecqueur's views on human nature and

24. Ibid, pp. 199-204, 239-240 & 243 (quotation, p. 204).

human society. He maintained, on the one hand, that human character was continually changing, and that laws and institutions had to be flexible, but he also (as we have seen) believed that he could define the essential human qualities and lay down the features of a better social order corresponding to these. He was able to skim over this problem to his own satisfaction because he was sure he knew the direction of historical development, namely away from a society in which egoistic individualism was rampant and men were but shadows of their true selves, and towards an 'organic', moral and egalitarian society in which the best in human nature would come to fruition. Just like human nature, then, society was in Pecqueur's opinion forever changing, but (provided one ignored certain periods of regression) within this constant change an evolutionary pattern could be detected. There were in any case, he suggested, certain features which could be detected in any and every society because the general structure of social life was "en parfaite analogie avec l'organisme humain, qui même se trouve modèle fidèlement sur lui".²⁵ These features included religion, culture, art, science, industry, an educational system, and a state. He allotted the state a central role in political life, and this as we shall see, fitted in neatly with his opinions on economic policy. However, the most important point about Pecqueur's general view of man and society was

25. Ibid, p. 225.

that while he followed Rousseau and the Saint-Simonians with his organic metaphors and his preoccupation with authority, he remained in the Enlightenment tradition when assuming that there was a direct correspondence between 'human nature' and social structure and that it was possible to improve the fit by making society more just and rational. Again, this was a blend of Romanticism and Enlightenment rationalism which was in general accord with the remnants of Marx's liberal, semi-Hegelian view of the state and society.

Notwithstanding its bulk, Pecqueur's Théorie nouvelle was more an intellectual manifesto than a treatise. It was an appeal for a new, broad-ranging social science which would include the subject-matter of classical political economy while treating economic questions not in isolation (as did the Ricardians) but in a social and political context. The groundwork for this had already been laid by Robert Owen in Britain and Fourier and the Saint-Simonians in France, he suggested, so the first task was to produce a synthesis of the best of their work. Although the tenets of the 'science' would be provisional and subject to progressive revision, he argued that certain of its principles could be laid down immediately, in contradistinction to those of English liberal economics. It would be a 'moral' science, that is, instead of falsely pretending value-neutrality, it would admit overtly that the thrust of its analyses would reflect the social goals of equality, justice and the welfare of the

whole population.²⁶

Pecqueur defined the basic problem to be solved by his new 'social economy' as that of deciding what were the "dispositions, combinaisons et les moyens" which would produce the greatest human wellbeing ("bonheur"). This sounded as though he presupposed a utilitarian moral philosophy, but he stated firmly that the greatest happiness of the greatest number was not his only aim -- egalitarianism would be a premiss of equal importance. Moreover, the ultimate purpose of this new socialist economics would be to help create the society best adapted to human nature. The new discipline would thus be practical as well as theoretical, and would ultimately have a double moral purpose: to help men fulfill all that was best in their characters, and to create new social institutions suited to this new, improved human race.

Pecqueur was thus quite frank in arguing the need not merely for a more humane use of the economic information collected by the liberal economists, but for a different interpretation of this information. Economic 'facts', he maintained, were necessarily viewed through one ideological prism or another, so socialists must perfect a socialist political economy to rival the existing liberal version. In any case, the Ricardians were doing no more than provide apologetic descriptions of the economic status-quo, and, egalitarian principles aside, it was quite evident that the current

26. Ibid, "Introduction" (unpaginated) & pp. 207-209.

economic arrangements were not an efficient means of ensuring the intellectual, moral, and material progress of the nation. In short, Pecqueur believed both that the liberal economists' values were wrong, and that they were incompetent because they refused to prescribe how the state could intervene to increase production and improve distribution.²⁷

The aspect of Pecqueur's work to which Marx paid the closest attention was his analysis of the social and economic problems of contemporary capitalism. Pecqueur did not single out industrialisation as the source of the social disruption which he saw around him, but he did emphasise the sharp antagonism of interests between entrepreneurs and proletarians. In discussing the social consequences of unregulated commercial capitalism he focussed on the uncertainty of business fortunes and the extremes of poverty and suffering inflicted on the workers. Arguing that pauperism stemmed directly from the producers' lack of ownership of their means of production, he contended that if workers were to receive the full value of their labour, excessive working-hours could be cut as extremes of wealth and destitution could be abolished.²⁸ Like the Saint-Simonians he was convinced that the bourgeoisie was a parasitic class of idlers able to live off the backs of the workers because of its monopoly of land, realty, machinery and liquid capital. The

27. Ibid, pp. 199-209 & 404-409.

28. Ibid, pp. 419-420.

proletarians produced by their labour the total wealth of the nation, he argued, but a large part of this was siphoned off by the non-producers, leaving insufficient to assure them adequate living standards. The root problem, then, was the private ownership of the means of production by a useless élite.

Actually, although he regarded the question of private property as fundamental, Pecqueur also identified three other economic causes of the current social crisis. He contended that free competition was the 'mother' of inequality, poverty and misery. Why? Because the free-market system presupposed a society in which men were isolated entities antagonistic to their rivals in the economic war; it had destroyed the traditional solidarity and mutual aid which had once existed between families. Now nobody cared any more about their neighbours, and the victims of the economic system were exposed to the full rigours of its cruelty. Moreover, Pecqueur added, free-market competition was a game of chance which favoured the rich and the strong. The market system produced an uneven distribution of goods at constantly varying prices, resulting in much unfairness, uncertainty and wastage. Not only was it unsatisfactory for the consumer, it was a continual gamble for the businessman who faced the ever-present possibility that he would be left with unsold goods. Because of the inefficiency of the free-market as a system of distribution, then, overproduction of goods was inherent in the capitalist system, and trade-crises were

unavoidable, bringing in their train bankruptcies and mass unemployment. Laissez-faire was thus in Pecqueur's opinion harmful even to the bourgeoisie, but he stressed that in economic slumps the fate of the workers was worse because they had no cushion of private property to fall back on.²⁹

In addition to this wholesale attack on competition Pecqueur lambasted the financial institutions of commercial capitalism. He refused to accept as legitimate the charging of interest on borrowed capital. One of the major difficulties which hampered groups of workers trying to set up co-operative producers' associations, he pointed out, was the high cost of borrowing enough money for the initial capital outlays. And even if workers successfully obtained a capital loan their enterprise would be hamstrung ever after by excessive interest payments. He was therefore flatly opposed to the entire credit and banking system which serviced capitalist trade and manufacturing.³⁰ The tremendous inequalities of wealth in contemporary France were largely the result, he believed, of the bourgeoisie's monopoly of "capital de reproduction" (i.e., capital goods which could be used productively to create more wealth). In effect, only the possessors of capital had a real opportunity to enrich themselves, whereas workers were completely dependent on the entrepreneurs for their jobs and income.³¹ How had this

29. Ibid, pp. 404-424.

30. Ibid, pp. 423-440.

31. Ibid, pp. 407-408.

inequity grown up, and what perpetrated it in modern society? Property rights, he answered, in particular the right of inheritance, and the right of proprietors to give or sell their land and workshops to whomsoever they desired. These two legal provisions meant that a relatively small number of bourgeois families could retain and build up their property and capital, denying the workers the use of land and machinery except as poorly paid wage-slaves.

Pecqueur thus tried to demonstrate in detail how private property, free competition, and the credit system combined to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. The extremely unequal distribution of wealth was, in his view, "le problème capital de notre époque", but he was convinced that it was inseparable from that of capitalist production. Private ownership of workshops and factories, he reiterated, inevitably produced tremendous inequalities of income. He admitted that industrial capitalism in England had considerably expanded that country's national wealth, but this economic growth, he claimed, had only exacerbated injustice. The 100% increase in production in England in the last century had merely made the aristocracy wealthier and the masses more poverty-stricken. Hence, growth for its own sake was no answer to the social problem -- it was no use expanding the national cake if the workers' slice diminished in proportion. Production, after all, should only be a means to a higher living standard for the whole population, and expanded production was only warranted if there was a

simultaneous improvement in the equality of distribution of wealth.

The crucial question facing economists was therefore not how to speed up economic growth, but how to better distribute the fruits of existing growth. Or, to put it another way, the real goal was better incomes and working conditions for the mass of workers. He proposed two slogans which would sum up the gist of his economic policies: "Détruire la propriété...c'est enfin se donner les moyens d'assurer à tous la propriété!" and "Tout au travail, rien au capital!"³² Only by abolishing private property and the free-market, he concluded, would it be possible to remove the social chasm which meant that while some men could get rich without working, others had to labour fifteen to eighteen hours a day in order to barely survive with no time to cultivate their minds or bodies. Of these two basic causes of exploitation (property and competition), Pécqueur (like Proudhon but unlike Blanc), believed that the former was the more fundamental evil -- in the last analysis, he argued, unrestricted competition was a side-effect of the capitalist system of production, whereas the private appropriation of capital was its very heart.

Not surprisingly, then, he criticised as ineffective all attempts to reform capitalism without grasping the nettle of private property. But he took seriously the possibility

32. Ibid, pp. 403 & 515.

of gradually and peacefully reforming the capitalist system out of existence, and examined in detail the consequences, under capitalism, of a series of proposed social and economic reforms. The seven he gave most credence to were (i) higher wages and shorter hours, (ii) worker participation in profits, (iii) a profits tax, (iv) new credit institutions, (v) inheritance restrictions, (vi) price fixing, and (vii) the promotion of voluntary producers' and consumers' co-operatives. He recognised that all of these would probably involve a much higher degree of state involvement in the economy than was currently the case, but he saw no problem in this.³³

Some of these measures he pronounced more practical than others. For example, he approved of the idea of a profits tax, but noted that this would go against one of the principles of capitalism, the entrepreneur's right to make as much profit as he could. Legislation ensuring worker participation was feasible, he judged, but it would involve stringent and complicated book-keeping arrangements enforced by the state if the laws were not to be evaded by uncooperative entrepreneurs. He applauded inheritance restrictions but suggested that they made sense only as moves towards full socialisation of the land and means of production. He was sympathetic to the Saint-Simonian proposal for a new,

33. Ibid, pp. 429-442.

state-controlled banking and credit system to be used as a planning tool, regulating production in different branches of industry and controlling interest rates (which, as we have seen, he believed should be rock-bottom), but he warned that the scheme would only work if it was created comprehensively on a national scale, supervising all production and replacing the existing banking system. He was more hesitant over the value of voluntary producers' associations operating within a capitalist economy; the problem was that to compete effectively with capitalist firms these would have to be operated in a capitalist fashion and so would exploit workers and consumers just like their rivals. Producers' co-operatives could only work properly, he maintained, if they were freed from the vicissitudes of the market and the need to pay interest on borrowed capital, -- that is, if capital and property were socialised, and they were integrated into a planned economy.

He opposed price-fixing categorically, claiming that in a free-enterprise economy it merely discouraged investment and production, indirectly causing bankruptcies and unemployment -- hence as a transitional measure it was useless, while in a socialised economy it would be redundant. As for legislated higher wages and shorter hours, he was sceptical. He doubted whether the legislation could be easily made effective, and he thought that there would be unwelcome economic repercussions, in the form of higher prices and scarcity of goods, if it was. About trade-unions

and strikes he had little to say, but the tenor of his arguments on wages (he accepted a 'subsistence-level' theory) indicated that he was ambivalent about their value and placed more faith in state action on a nation-wide scale than in collective bargaining at the local level.

In general, his attitude to the various economic reforms listed above was that some would be ineffective (even "vains ou dangereux") while others would be useful in a limited way provided they were not regarded as panaceas and were consciously treated as transitional means to a fully socialised economy. If regarded as permanent solutions they would probably result in the revival of feudal guilds and the perpetuation of an older form of inequality -- in short, they would be an attempt to set the clock back and would stifle economic progress. Hence, he concluded, there was really no half-way house between economic liberalism and state socialism. Under capitalism the working class was doomed to poverty and subsistence wages, and in the long run its sufferings could be alleviated only by an economic revolution. Property and competition went hand in hand, and would have to be abolished together, although, in the short term, a government aiming at a gradual transition to socialism could place sufficient curbs on them to soften exploitation and eradicate some of the worst abuses of capitalism.³⁴

This partial critique of reformism was aimed at Louis

34. Ibid, pp. 423-429.

Blanc and the left-wing republicans grouped around La Réforme. Pecqueur also took the trouble to pen a lengthy criticism of Fourierism, which he regarded as the other plausible alternative to state socialism that had gained wide currency among the French left. He recognised the attractiveness of Fourier's vision, indeed he had himself been seduced by it for a while in the 1830s, but he was now convinced that the phalansterian 'solution' was specious. Fourier's world, he claimed, despite its promise to give full reign to the passions, would in fact reproduce the same hierarchical structure of authority and privilege and the same inequality as the old world. Somewhat inconsistently, he also attacked Fourier for being too democratic, suggesting that the way the phalansteries were organised would make their members the slaves of majority opinion. Moreover, he maintained, Fourier had ignored rather than solved the key problem of economic organisation, that of combining centralised planning in order to ensure efficient production with an egalitarian distribution system, because he had never sorted out his views on the issue of centralisation versus decentralisation. And above all, there was something more fundamental which went against the grain of Pecqueur's deeply-held religious outlook: Fourier, he charged, had attempted to create a hedonistic society without morality, and this was an impossibility, since man was by nature a moral and religious creature. It was a comprehensive indictment which probably had the effect of raising Marx's respect

for Fourierism, since he was unlikely to have been impressed by Pecqueur's claims that the phalansteries would be excessively democratic or insufficiently religious. He probably gave much greater credence to Pecqueur's strictures on the inadequacy of left-Republican reformism than he did to his diatribe against Fourier.³⁵

What were Pecqueur's views on the nature of the future socialist community? In broad outlines these were quite clear, although he had not worked them out in much detail. The most 'scientific', libertarian and progressive solution to the social problem, he argued, would be a co-operative, communal form of society in which private property was forbidden and some individual rights were restricted in the interests of the society as a whole. In this society everyone would be free to work creatively with his own tools and to utilise as much land as he required. To ensure this, all land and all means of production (raw materials, buildings, machinery, etc.,) would be owned socially, i.e., jointly by the whole population, and administered by the state. Since all wealth would be produced co-operatively, using communally owned materials, all workers would have the right to an equal share of the consumer articles created. But because production would be planned and monitored by the state, they would be state employees, producing for the

35. Ibid, pp. 460-462.

community rather than for themselves. Their efforts would be co-ordinated by the government, and the wastage inherent in anarchic capitalism would be eliminated.

One of the most important of Pecqueur's goals was to match perfectly supply and demand in the economy. Given complete state control over production targets and wages, he suggested, it would be possible to establish both the cost price of all articles and the demand for them at this price, and once one had this information it would be feasible to attune production almost exactly to consumer preferences. Hence excessively high prices due to an excess of demand over supply would be avoided, and there would be no profit margin, so consumers would get the articles they wanted just as cheaply as was possible at the operative level of technology. It would also be possible, he asserted, to calculate fairly precisely the number of hours it was really necessary for workers to work in order to satisfy the total demand in the economy. And if production was planned rationally, the hours worked would be the minimum possible, so exploitation would be at an end. As for wages, Pecqueur believed that all workers should be paid the same, this being the only scheme compatible in his eyes with the principle of an egalitarian distribution of social wealth. Pecqueur's social system, then, was non-propertarian, centralised, and egalitarian, and may aptly be summed up by the label 'state socialism'.³⁶

36. Ibid, pp. 200, 394-399, 513-515 & 559-604.

It was a vision which left an indelible imprint on Marx's mind, although he was far from completely won over to it in the summer of 1844.

When he picked up Eugene Buret's De la misère des classes laborieuses en Angleterre et en France, Marx probably expected to use it as a source of factual information about the living and working conditions of the urban lower classes in the two countries. This, indeed, was what he found in the main body of the large, two-volume work. But Buret preceded his descriptive reporting with a long (one hundred page) essay of a more theoretical nature, and, to judge from his quotations from Buret's book in the Paris Manuscripts, this was what Marx judged the most valuable section of the tome.³⁷ Buret, then, not only provided him with some of the factual data he needed to deepen his understanding of the industrial proletariat, he also influenced him as a social and economic theorist.

There were four questions discussed by Buret in his "Introduction" that were of especial interest to the young German: the phenomenon of industrialisation, the social consequences of this economic revolution, the limitations of classical political economy, and the idea of a new social science which would guide the creation of a new social order better adapted to the new industrial technology. Some of

37. Buret, De la misère..., op. cit. Marx, "Deconomish-philosophische Manuskripte...", MEGA I, 3, pp. 50-51 & 63; MECW, 3, pp. 244-246 & 257.

what Buret had to say overlapped with Pecqueur's Théorie Nouvelle; for example, both Pecqueur and Buret criticised English liberal economics and proposed an alternative approach to economic phenomena. But Buret's detailed assessment of the nature and problems of English industrial capitalism was new to Marx, and gave him a new perspective on the Industrial Revolution. It was to be reinforced after he wrote the Paris Manuscripts by long conversations with Friedrich Engels about industrial Britain, but in the summer of 1844 Marx's knowledge of industrialisation and its social consequences derived almost exclusively from Buret, except for the more general opinions he had picked up earlier from Leroux and Considerant.

Buret's book was a plea for an intensive study of English social history because England was the country, par excellence, of the Industrial Revolution. A new industrial society was being born in Europe, he pointed out, and it had grown in its most rapid and extreme form in the new, grimy, sprawling urban areas of the north of England. Europe, he commented, had now experienced twenty-five years of industrialisation, since, on the Continent at least, the factory system utilising steam-power was a post-1814 phenomenon. This was long enough to reveal some of the essential characteristics of the new society, and it was high time that some heed was taken of the warning signs before too late. To start with, there was the problem that the new world was emerging in a haphazard, unplanned way. This is what had

been allowed to occur earlier in England, so one could look at the English new towns to see what the results of this non-policy would be in France. But even more important than the unaesthetic and unhealthy consequences of unregulated urbanisation, Buret argued, were the unforeseen social phenomena accompanying English, and beginning to accompany French, industrialisation. The most obvious of these were recurrent economic crises, mass unemployment, the failure of the working masses to benefit from the new technology, extremes of wealth and poverty, and control of markets and prices by a new breed of speculators. In short, England showed that while rapid economic growth and the mechanisation of industry brought untold wealth to entrepreneurs and landowners, it also meant mass pauperism. It thus created, or more precisely, drastically exacerbated, the 'social problem', by which blanket term Buret -- in common with Blanc, Leroux, Pecqueur and the others -- meant the existence of a highly stratified, conflict-ridden society in which a large percentage of the population seemed condemned to exploitation, misery and poverty.³⁸

Buret was sensitive to the social strains caused by rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. Convinced that the French Revolution had been a disaster for the nation, he was worried that if France went the way of England the unresilient social fabric would be ripped apart again and the

38. Buret, op. cit., pp. 27-81.

suffering populace would once more undergo the horrors of civil war. France, he believed, was a country easily infected with the germ of revolution, and social reforms were required immediately to immunise her from this sickness. The present socio-economic regime, like that of the mid-eighteenth century, was sowing the seeds of a future cataclysm, and further government inaction could result only in a social explosion. Hence industrialisation, if it could not be avoided, at least had to be carefully controlled, and firm measures taken to ensure that it did not produce the kind of economic and social chaos evident across the Channel.

Buret, moreover, suspected that laissez-faire capitalism was far from the ideal economic regime for an industrialising nation. Apart from the social costs incurred by unrestrained economic warfare, he believed that laissez-faire was performing poorly on purely economic criteria. While the growth of the English cotton industry had been staggering to start with, this was due to the absence of up-to-date competitors, so one had to discount the admittedly considerable increase in Great Britain's national wealth before the 1820s. Yet since she had begun to face Continental and American competition, Buret considered England had not done nearly so well, nor had the recent economic performance of France and Germany justified great faith in the material benefits of industrialisation. If one examined the 'progress' of the European economy in the 1830s, he argued, the evidence

showed not growth but stagnation, or rather some short bursts of growth followed by setbacks which added up to much the same. No European country had yet fully recovered from the slump of 1837, and it looked very much as though the capitalist system had fallen into that 'stationary state' predicted and feared by Adam Smith. And for laissez-faire capitalism a 'stationary state' meant decadence, a trough of low-level economic activity bringing mass unemployment and widespread suffering for an industrial population whose jobs depended on continuing growth and expanding markets. As industrialisation proceeded, he explained, it became more and more difficult to maintain the same rate of expansion, so that stagnation gradually became the norm. This would be true under any economic system, but its implications were particularly telling for laissez-faire capitalism, which was only viable in Buret's eyes when the fruits of rapid growth outweighed the disadvantages. The truth was, he concluded, that capitalism was becoming less and less attractive. "les avantages attribués à notre système économique diminuent donc en nombre et en importance, à mesure que se développe le système".³⁹

But if Buret was sceptical about the ability of laissez-faire capitalism to deliver the goods, he was appalled by its social consequences. Not only did he believe

39. Ibid, p. 72.

industrialism was sowing revolution and civil war, he saw it as primarily responsible for the widespread lower-class poverty and distress which he described eloquently in the main body of his book. Horrified by the mass pauperism his research had uncovered, he was indignant at the indifference shown by politicians, entrepreneurs, and political economists alike. Poverty, he stated, was a sort of 'original sin' for which everyone in modern society, not just the businessmen, was responsible -- it was not merely a practical problem to be solved in a technical fashion, it was also a moral stain which had to be washed away before a better (spiritually purer as well as materially more egalitarian) society could be created.

Why was capitalism daily creating more poverty? Buret's answer was that by concentrating capital in fewer and fewer hands it was breeding a new 'feudal aristocracy', a rich élite cut off from the rest of the nation. While these beneficiaries of the wealth created by the new machines lived in luxury and splendour, the mass of workers were receiving an ever diminishing share of the income thus generated. Because of the unregulated market system, speculators could interfere with the distribution of goods, artificially raising prices and making unearned fortunes at the expense of the ordinary consumer. Since wages were falling in various branches of industry due to competition from new machinery, the worker's living standard was being squeezed from both sides at once, and the real incomes of the urban work-

force were declining towards subsistence-level. Even when the economic conjuncture was favourable, then, the plight of the lower income groups was serious, but free-market capitalism had additional ways of increasing their suffering. The introduction of new machinery and recurrent recessions both brought widespread unemployment, frequently on too severe a scale for the charity of religious institutions and private individuals to cope with the starvation which then afflicted penniless families. Even in periods of boom, unemployment was endemic in some trades, and rapid technological change, coupled with the wild fluctuations in the health of the economy, gave almost every worker an unprecedented sense of insecurity -- he hardly knew from day to day whether he would still have a job or whether his meagre wage would remain uncut. In material terms, then, the current economic system had already produced great extremes of wealth and poverty, and the inequalities were growing all the time.⁴⁰

Euret was equally concerned with the psychological effects of the factory system on the workers. Describing the unhealthy and dangerous working conditions, the long hours and tedious work, and the poor housing of the workforce crowded into the new urban centres, he argued that disease, fatigue and inadequate diets meant in turn unhappiness, vice and ignorance. The mental and moral state of

40. Ibid, pp. 55-70.

the lower classes no declared deplorable. Crime, sexual promiscuity, suicide and a mood of hopeless desperation were prevalent among the "floating population" inhabiting the slums and ghettos of the big cities. Naturally things were worse among the jobless, but Buret believed that the factory workers were also, in a different manner, being reduced to the level of animals. The wage-labourer, he argued, was being "dehumanised" by industrial capitalism in a way which the artisan had in the past normally escaped, no matter what material difficulties he had encountered. This new "dehumanisation" took two different forms: the absolute dependency of the labourer on the capitalist for his living (which was a new kind of slavery), and the reduction of labour to the status of a commodity.

Buret regarded this double humiliation of the worker as the most iniquitous facet of industrial production. He argued that wealthy capitalists now exercised an absolute power of life and death over millions of human beings, used this power to extract the maximum of labour for the minimum of wages, and looked on workers not as people but as a commodity the supply of which exceeded the demand. As a result, wages were governed not by a reasonable and humane assessment of what the worker's family needed to live properly, but by the harsh law of competition in the free-market, which meant that only in exceptional circumstances could they rise above subsistence-level. In one crucial respect, though, Buret claimed that labour was different from most other

commodities: the supply was inelastic. The worker, he pointed out, could not be said to sell his labour freely in the market-place when he had no choice in the matter, having no other means of subsistence. Hence to the great disparity in wealth between rich and poor was added another equally severe contrast: between the freedom of the propertied élite and the beast-like servitude of the masses. There was, therefore, a moral side to the 'social problem' as well as a material one -- how to rescue the labouring population from the non-human psychological condition into which they were being forced by industrial capitalism.⁴¹

What remedies did classical political economy have to offer to cure this dismal state of affairs? "None", replied Buret, and he had much to say about the limits and defects of the discipline, particularly in the form given it by Ricardo and his disciples. Like Pecqueur, he maintained that the English school had exhibited callous incompetence over the problem of extremes of wealth and poverty. It had indulged in technical squabbles over "value" and ground-rent while neglecting to undertake a careful empirical study of the crucial issues of population, wages and pauperism. French liberals were no better; Say, for example, showed blithe unconcern about poverty, assumed with no justification that all production was good in itself and that unlimited competition was beneficial, and offered a preposterous 'law' of

41. Ibid, pp. 43-53 & 74.

supply and demand which was in blatant contradiction with the reality of a country like Ireland. As for Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' theory of a natural economic equilibrium, (a postulate assumed by liberals on both sides of the Channel), this was in Buret's opinion simply a bad joke. The truth of the matter was, he argued, that post-Smithian economic science was daily being tested and found wanting because it had failed to predict recurrent economic crises and the pauperisation of the work-force. Even among the English 'experts' there was no longer much consensus, and in fact classical political economy was disintegrating as an academic discipline because of the manifest failure of its doctrines to fit the facts. To Buret's mind it was quite obvious that economists would have to start again from scratch, taking full account of the lessons of the last two decades of European industrialisation.

Buret thought he could explain where the liberals had gone wrong. One of the crucial mistakes of the traditional approach, he suggested, was to define political economy as a 'science of wealth'. This had led it to ignore poverty and to become an apologia for profit-making. The Ricardians had taken this approach to its logical conclusion, accepting the goal of expanded gross national product as a be-all and end-all, without bothering to assess its compatibility with other goals such as the abolition of poverty. In fact, continued Buret, the Ricardians were wrong to limit their enquiries to wealth and had forgotten the

utilitarian philosophy in which their supposedly value-neutral 'science' originated; wealth should be merely a means to the happiness of the greatest number of the population, and in neglecting this English political economy had sacrificed ends to means and plunged into blind immorality.

Buret meant what he said when he laid this charge of 'immorality' against Ricardo and his disciples. Ricardo, he believed, by divorcing economics from politics and ethics, and by trying to turn it into an abstract, mathematical 'science' narrowly focussed on the techniques of profit-making and capital accumulation, had made classical political economy degenerate and unethical. Moreover, he claimed, Ricardo's programme was methodologically impossible. No social science could eradicate values from its analyses, and notwithstanding their yearning for the prestigious mantle of 'pure science' the Ricardians unconsciously -- or perhaps cynically -- adopted the attitudes and values of the businessmen whose behaviour they charted. But in refusing to examine fully the implications of the 'laissez-faire' policies they advocated, he charged, they were acting like a child who had no conscience about the results of his acts. He gave the Ricardian theory of wages as an example of this blinkered positivism -- the Ricardians, he asserted, sanctioned the heinous treatment of labour as a commodity despite the fact that categorising it in this way entailed the abandonment of all hope of improving the worker's lot. In short, they wilfully pretended that subsistence wages and

child-labour were inevitable, ignoring the point that this was so only if the law of supply and demand was regarded as untouchable. On their view poverty was ineradicable, Buret concluded, but they held this view only because the businessmen whose interests they defended were loth to interfere with a free-market situation in which all the cards were stacked in their favour.⁴²

Although he had an aversion to Ricardo, Buret wavered between viewing English economists as cynical apologists for the status-quo and portraying them as honest but misguided scholars. In a more charitable mood, he explained that the fundamental mistake of Smith and Malthus (whom he respected as acute observers of the English economic scene) had been to interpret the transitory phenomena of early industrialisation as permanent economic laws. The positivist conception of an economic 'law' was, he suggested, too "hard" and deterministic, ignoring that human economic behaviour changed over the course of history and that men were not automotons but beings who could calculate the consequences of different lines of action and choose accordingly. Buret did not spell out the implications of this remark, but he apparently believed that the English economists were wrong to impose a pattern of 100% causal determination on economic behaviour because the regularities discernible in contemporary economic life were at best statistical generalisations which might

42. Ibid, pp. 1-15, 23-24, 28-36, 42-47, & 63-65.

not hold good in the future. This, then, was the second ground upon which he challenged the methodology of classical liberal economics. In his view, political economy could and should be neither value-neutral nor deterministic.

Like Pecqueur, Buret conceived of a new kind of social science which would include the subject-matter of traditional political economy but be broader-ranging in its concerns. Indeed, Pecqueur's programmatic "économie sociale" was very much the kind of discipline he had in mind -- it would be 'active' and 'practical', that is, concerned to evaluate governmental economic policies and social legislation on the basis of careful, empirical studies of pressing problems like the incidence of pauperism and demographic changes. It would also, as we have seen, give up any pretence of being value-neutral, taking the welfare of the whole population as its goal and focussing especially on the living standards of the lower classes. One of its specific premises, Buret announced, would be the 'right to work', i.e., full employment would be a top priority. Another assumption would be that economic planning was essential if industrial society was to utilise modern technology to build a better future. Buret, in fact, thought of economics as rather like town planning; the economist should be a social engineer cautiously experimenting with reforms in order to gradually fashion a new, more humane, social order. Echoing the perspective of the Saint-Simonians he stressed the reorganisation of produc-

conflict and heading off violent revolution.⁴³

He had no illusions that it would be easy to establish the new discipline. Little had been done so far, although some groundwork had been laid by Fourier and Saint-Simon, who had at least revealed to the world "les pièges redoutables que cachait l'apparente prospérité de l'industrie". He called Fourier's work the most ingenious critique of laissez-faire economics ever written, and suggested that his insights could be combined with those of Sismondi. He was quite lavish in his praise of the 'Italian school' which, he considered, had done a much better job of reconciling 'science' with 'feeling' than had the English and French, and he described Sismondi as "un écrivain moitié italien et moitié français qui en est l'expression la plus intelligente".⁴⁴ The Sismondians, he added, had correctly criticised unlimited competition, and demonstrated that increased production did not always entail increased wealth. He applauded the Sismondian analysis of trade crises, remarking that blind production, overstimulated by competition and exceeding demand, could not always be sold on uncertain and saturated markets. Indeed, he identified overproduction as the greatest scourge of an industrial population, and earmarked the task of avoiding it as another top priority of his new social science. Further, the Sismondians had proved that it was essential to

43. Ibid, pp. 29-35, 38-42, 46-47, 53-58, 62-63, & 79-81.

44. Ibid, p. 34.

plan production in order to reap its potential benefits and avoid its harmful side-effects: industrialisation and machinism need not necessarily bring vice, ignorance and slavery, but they would unless carefully controlled and regulated. In a word, they had recognised that "les choses de l'industrie ne s'arrangent pas d'elle-mêmes, à l'amiable, avec l'ordre mathématique dont Ricardo a proclamé les formules algébriques".⁴⁵

Apart from Fourier and Sismondi, the only economist Buret thought had made a useful contribution was Malthus. While not exempting Malthus from the general criticisms he had made of the English school, Buret read him as a maverick who had broken with orthodoxy in important respects. Above all, he had raised, although far from solved, the population issue, and had correctly refused to divorce economics from politics and social policies. On the other hand, Buret was unwavering in his opposition to the English Poor Law of 1834, which he interpreted as Malthusianism put into practice. This approach to social problems, he argued, entailed the banning of private charity and the total passivity of government in the face of inexorable economic laws. Such an attitude of resigned non-interference while the capitalist economy did its worst was the logical conclusion to be drawn from the premisses of post-Smithian liberal economics, which was why "les économistes les plus distingués de l'Angleterre

professent unanimement cette doctrine". So Malthusianism at least had the dubious merit, in Buret's eyes, of showing the absurd and immoral results of interpreting economic laws as inexorable forces which themselves prescribed social justices. Malthusianism was, as it were, the reductio ad absurdum of traditional political economy, while at the same time it demonstrated, once and for all, the impossibility of divorcing economics from politics and facts from values.⁴⁶

Buret drew from this aspect of Malthus' work an important conclusion concerning the subject-matter of his new discipline and its methodology. 'Social facts', he argued, had a peculiar character: more difficult to obtain than 'physical facts', they were unlike them in not being subject to constant and periodic laws allowing the repetition of experimental observation. For this reason political economy could never be a causal science, and the social scientist should stringently avoid all deterministic or fatalistic interpretations. Furthermore, the size and complexity of modern society meant that the observer could only collect a small part of his data personally and was condemned to rely on the testimony of others. Social economics was therefore bound to be a tentative business, in which many errors would be made before truth was discovered, but in the meantime it at least helped men foresee the consequences of their present course, thus giving them the chance of avoiding disasters.⁴⁷

46. Ibid, p. 32.

47. Ibid, pp. 31 & 39-43.

The political lessons that Buret drew were firstly that the 'social problem' was already so severe that immediate action was imperative, and secondly that an experimental series of social reforms should be launched, concentrating initially on extirpating the worst abuses in the present system: the poverty, insecurity and slavery of the urban factory worker. So if Buret and Pecqueur agreed on the need for a new social science and a more humane social order, and both advocated social reforms, they differed in their attitude towards these reforms. For Pecqueur reforms could be no more than a temporary and transitional device for ushering in a fundamentally different kind of society, whereas for Buret they would hopefully modify and reorganise the existing order. The two French socialist economists illustrated for Marx the difference between a revolutionary/reformist position and a straight-forward reformist one, and he was more sympathetic to Pecqueur than to Buret on this issue.

Marx published only one article of substance in the summer of 1844, a critique of Arnold Ruge's views on the Silesian weavers' rebellion (which, as we have seen, also attracted Engels' attention). This was written in July when, presumably, Marx was engaged in drafting the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts.⁴⁸ It indicates, among other things, the influence which his reading of Buret was having on his

48. Marx, "Kritische Randglossen zu dem Artikel: 'Der

thought. At much the same time, probably as a preliminary to writing the Manuscripts, he jotted in his notebooks comments on an economic text-book, James Mill's Elements d'économie politique.⁴⁹ His remarks went well beyond the topics treated by Mill, and anticipated many of the themes of the Manuscripts. Adopting the critical approach to classical political economy he had found in Buret and Pecqueur, he attacked Ricardo and his disciple Mill as apologists for commercial capitalism, and sketched some of the ways in which capitalist economic relations 'dehumanised' human beings caught in the system. In this note, too, he discussed at some length the Saint-Simonian scheme (which, as we have seen, he had found in the writings of Bazard and Enfantin) for a state-controlled banking system, through which production could be planned on a national scale and the competitive anarchy of laissez-faire overcome. The article against Ruge and the critique of Mill thus provide some evidence on Marx's initial reactions to the economists, both English liberals and French socialists, that he had just been studying.

Ruge, who had been a close friend of Marx's until the collapse of the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher in the spring of 1844, had written his article for a newspaper called

49. James Mill, Elements of Political Economy, London, Baldwin Cradock & Joy, 1821. Marx read the French translation by J.T. Parisot, Eléments d'économie politique, Paris, Bossage frères, 1823. His notes and comments on this were part of his Paris Notebooks, "Exzerptheft aus Paris, 1844-1845", MEGA I, 3, pp. 520-550; MECU, 3, pp. 211-228.

Vorwärts which circulated among the German artisan community in Paris. He had downplayed the size and importance of the weavers' uprising, claiming that the Prussian government had not been alarmed by the incident and had easily suppressed the riots with a few troops. Marx replied in the same paper. In his opinion Ruge had missed completely the significance of the Silesian events. He had neglected the fact that the revolt was not a political insurrection aimed at the Prussian monarchy but a trade dispute with the German bourgeoisie. There was thus, in Marx's opinion, a direct parallel between the Silesian affair and recent English labour disturbances, and the lesson to be drawn was that Germany was already beginning to experience the same pattern of social disruption caused by the introduction of machinery. In short, the Silesian incident was the first sign of a future German social revolution against industrial capitalism.⁵⁰

Convinced that Germany would soon experience the social problems of contemporary England, Marx devoted much of this reply to a discussion of English pauperism, drawing on Buret's De la misère for facts and quotations. England, he maintained, was the "country of pauperism", in which the distress of the workers was "not partial but universal", extending beyond the factory districts into the rural areas. Roused to indignation by Buret's descriptions of the working

50. Marx, "Kritische Randglossen...", MEGA I, 3, pp. 18-22; MFCU 3 22 201 205

conditions and housing in the industrial centres of England, he expostulated on the "pestilential atmosphere of English cellar dwellings...the fantastic rags worn by the English poor...the flabby, shrunken flesh of the women, undermined by labour and poverty, children crawling about in the dirt, (and) deformity resulting from excessive labour in the monotonous mechanical operations of the factories!" How could this disgusting state of affairs arise, and why was it not dealt with forthwith? Marx tried to answer these questions. Pauperism was not abolished, he suggested, because the bourgeoisie (the class with the financial means at its disposal to cure poverty) did not understand the problem, conceiving it in a "childish and stupid way". Similarly, the English government -- in this respect typical of the modern bourgeois state -- was unable to grasp the general causes of such social ills, and in any case refused to accept responsibility for poverty, categorising it as an economic matter in which politicians should not interfere.⁵¹

He attempted to justify these harsh judgements by an analysis of ways in which English and French governments had treated paupers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Revolutionary Convention, he pointed out, had tried to eradicate poverty by political decree, but without success despite the energy with which the Jacobins tried to enforce their legislation. Napoleon had tried to abolish

51. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 8-11; MECW, 3, pp. 192-195.

mendicancy at a stroke by administrative fiat, a punitive approach which in Marx's opinion amounted to jailing the poor for being out of work. Later French governments had relied on similar administrative measures or had turned a blind eye to the problem, leaving it to charitable institutions and private benevolence. Marx saw the English Poor Law of 1834 as the most concerted effort by any government that had so far been tried -- England was, he wrote, the "only country where large-scale political action against pauperism can be said to have taken place". The new Poor Law, he remarked ironically, was based on Malthusian 'philanthropy' combined with the view that "pauperism is poverty which the workers have brought upon themselves by their own fault, and therefore it is not a misfortune which must be prevented, but rather a crime which has to be suppressed and punished". In the new work-houses, he added sardonically, the English bourgeoisie had cunningly combined charity with revenge on the poor who so inconveniently constituted an ugly blemish on the social scene. The English government had, however, utterly failed to comprehend the causes of sharp increase in pauperism in the early decades of the nineteenth century, blaming it on the old Elizabethan legislation and the way this was interpreted by rural justices of the peace. The real cause, he asserted, was the advance of modern industry, which had undercut traditional 'cottage' manufacturing by artisans in villages and small towns.⁵²

In addition to explaining why mass poverty had come about and why nothing effective had been done about it, Marx began to probe the psychological effects of industrial capitalism on the work-force. He agreed with Buret and Pecqueur that the situation of the latter was thoroughly dehumanising. When he jotted down his commentary on Mill he thought that there were two main causes. One was the system of exchange, which had reduced social intercourse to a cash nexus in which buyers and sellers were trying to get the better of each other. In this way human relationships had degenerated to little more than "plundering", "deception" and "selfishness". Added to this defect of commercial capitalism was another inherent in the new industrial capitalism based on wage-labour and factory production. As artisans were progressively replaced by machines which they did not own, work (which previously had been a skilfull, creative act) was becoming more and more "labour to earn a living" and no longer an expression of the worker's personality. Using the term Hess had culled from Feuerbach, Marx labelled this new kind of obligatory work "estranged" labour.⁵³ He was to devote considerable attention to the topic in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts.

In his Vorwärts article and his commentary on Mill, Marx polemicised against liberal political economy. He took

53. "James Mill, Eléments d'économie politique" in "Exzerptheft aus Paris", MEGA I, 3, pp. 520-550 (especially, pp. 536, 539 & 547); MECW, 3, pp. 211-228 (especially pp. 217, 220 & 228).

issue with Mill's Ricardian 'cost of production' theory of value, claiming that since one of its premisses (an equilibrium of supply and demand) did not normally hold true, the theory was useless as a description of economic reality. He pilloried McCulloch for his bland disregard for the social evils generated by factory production under conditions of laissez-faire, to describe Ricardo he simply borrowed Buret's epithet "cynical", and he criticized Malthus for regarding overpopulation and pauperism as 'natural' phenomena with which the state could not and should not interfere. English economic theory, he remarked, was a 'scholarly' reflection of English economic conditions, by which he meant that Ricardo, Malthus and their followers were portraying as eternal 'laws of nature' the characteristics of the early 19th C. British economy. In his opinion, the basic problem with classical political economy was that its alleged 'laws' were too "abstract". The Ricardians especially had gone so far with their project of making economics a deductive, mathematical, 'scientific' discipline that it had lost contact with real, day-to-day economic phenomena like price fluctuations and government manipulations of the money supply. Taking seriously Buret's reflections on the difficulty of establishing an 'objective' science of political economy, Marx suggested that what economists called laws were merely the configurations of economic behaviour that they had seen fit to isolate for their own purposes. He doubted the existence of any

economies. For the most part, he suggested, economic behaviour was irregular and irrational, even random. The true law of political economy, he concluded, was chance, "from whose movement we, the scientific men, isolate certain factors arbitrarily in the form of laws".⁵⁴

Marx also commented in his notes on Mill's Eléments on the ideas of the French economists Destutt de Tracy and the Saint-Simonians. Critical of the monetary theory advanced by the classical school (whereby money was viewed as a commodity like any other), he argued that the 'man in the street' was quite correct when he took money to represent the true value of things and not really so naive as the liberals suggested when he believed in the absolute value of precious metals. Repeating an idea he had expressed in the second part of "On the Jewish Question", he pointed out that money was man's most ubiquitous point of contact with the capitalist economy. Since money was the medium of exchange, and the process of exchange was (as we saw above) itself dehumanising, money had become, in Marx's view, the embodiment and symbol of human 'alienation'. He was therefore sympathetic to the importance which the Saint-Simonians had attributed to financial questions, especially the concept of 'credit', and to their desire to utilise the banking system to control the economy. If one manipulated the credit system, he admitted, it appeared as though the power of the "alien,

54. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 531; MECW, 3, p. 211.

material force" of money over peoples' lives could be broken and genuine human relationships re-established between men. But unfortunately this was an illusion, and the Saint-Simonians had been deceived by appearances.⁵⁵ The credit system, under capitalism, exacerbated rather than diminished alienation because banking was based on a semblance of mutual trust, whereas in reality it was an extension of a fraudulent commercial system built on distrust and rivalry. Moreover, he argued, it was through the banking system that the élite of big businessmen gained control of the entire economy, concentrated wealth in their own hands, and also obtained political dominance over the state. The Saint-Simonians, then, had correctly perceived the importance of finance capital and the power of the big banks, but had totally misconstrued the significance of it all.⁵⁶

His reading of Destutt de Tracy helped Marx clarify his earlier suspicion that there was something degrading about trade under capitalist conditions. As human society had become more complex, he suggested, men had become increasingly dependent on each other, so that one could reasonably characterise social history as a "process of mutual integration". One aspect of this process, the growth of trade, had come to overshadow all others. Reflecting this in their writings, the classical political economists had

55. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 533; MECW, 3, p. 214.

described the world as a system of exchange: Destutt de Tracy, for example, had remarked that "society is a series of mutual exchanges", and Adam Smith had stressed that modern Europe was a commercial society. Smith's and de Tracy's insight was accurate, commented Marx, but they had made the mistake of applauding this lamentable state of affairs. He concluded laconically: "It is seen that political economy defines the estranged form of social intercourse as the essential and original form of corresponding to man's nature".⁵⁷

When making this remark, Marx had in mind a picture of an alternative, non-alienated society in which human nature was not decadent. His critique of commercial and industrial capitalism as doubly dehumanising only made sense if he could at least conceive a healthy society in which men's personalities were wholesome. His jottings on Mill revealed that he had retained his earlier Romantic ideal of a community in which there would be no curbs on the creative cultivation of natural gifts. Human nature, he reiterated, was in essence social, and men fulfilled themselves only when they discarded their selfish impulses and co-operated with their fellows to create a genuine community based on mutual aid.⁵⁸ However, while Marx did not derive this ideal from Pecqueur and the Saint-Simonians, it seems probable that his intellectual encounter with them reinforced his conception of what a proper social community should be like. Moreover, he seems

57. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 536-537; MECW, 3, p. 217.

58. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 536; MECW, 3, p. 217.

to have derived from the Fourierists (particularly, no doubt, Considerant) his views on non-alienated labour. Since meeting and reading French socialists in Paris, Marx had concluded that one of the major problems -- perhaps the major problem -- of industrial capitalism was its substitution of factory wage-labour for artisanal craftsmanship. He had not as yet explored all the ramifications of 'alienated labour', but he was already convinced, from his reading of Buret's De la misère especially, that factory work was soul- and body-destroying drudgery undertaken by the work-force simply in order to survive physically. In his mind's eye he contrasted this "slavery" with an ideal of a co-operative community in which the craftsmen helped each other and artistically expressed their personalities in their creations. Although rooted in his old adulation for the ancient Greek polis, it had now taken on some of the features of Parisian skilled workers' schemes for co-operative producers' associations.

Marx was to reveal in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts an intense admiration for French artisans' associations, so it seems that he had recently come across the 'associationist ideal', a project held dear by many Parisian skilled workers and probably embraced by at least some of the artisans he had met in the cafés and meeting-halls of the French capital. He had heard (and also probably read) Louis Blanc's schemes for the 'organisation du travail' through such producers' associations. At any rate, the evidence of his Paris manuscripts indicates that by the late

summer of 1844 Marx was contrasting the work experience of a factory 'hand' with that of an artisan in a producers' co-operative that was also a social community.

The crucial difference between the two, he recognised, was that in a co-operative community "my work would be a free manifestation of life, hence an enjoyment of life".⁵⁹ He had, in short, espoused the Fourierist ideal of work as joyous, and one of his most powerful reasons for repudiating industrial capitalism was that it imposed on men labour that was at once hateful and forced. Buret had convinced him that the factory operative's life was neither happy nor free, and he contrasted this reality with Fourier's vision of work as a freely-undertaken, creative and delightful activity. He was fascinated with the idea of a commune in which the members would supply each others' needs, treating the act of production as an artistic vehicle for self-expression and the act of exchange as a demonstration of brotherly affection. Life in such a commune, he seems to have believed, would be both aesthetically and morally superior to life in an industrial city.⁶⁰ He criticised the Fourierists for their exclusively agrarian orientation, but his own socialism in the early summer of 1844 was no less hostile to modern industrial machinery. He had been converted to the 'utopian'

59. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 547; MECW, 3, p. 228.

60. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 546-547; MECW, 3, pp. 227-228.

vision of the French skilled craftsman threatened by the Industrial Revolution.

Marx, then, opposed industrial society on ethical grounds because it exacerbated the process of 'dehumanisation' begun by competitive commerce. He had read that the urban wage-labourers were the worst victims of the economic system, and had deduced that they should therefore be the social group most bitterly opposed to it. Buret's reports of labour disturbances in the English factory towns appeared to reinforce this deduction, but Marx as yet had no first hand knowledge of either the working and housing conditions of factory operatives or the trade union movement in Britain. The only workers, French or German, he met in Paris were artisans. Whether any of these were fervent advocates of trade-union militancy is impossible to say since evidence is lacking, but it seems probable that he made contact, perhaps through Blanc or Leroux, perhaps through the German artisans he met, with one or two of the 200-odd trade societies -- overt trade-unions were illegal -- which existed in Paris under the last years of the July Monarchy. If so, this would help explain his glowing tribute to the success of French artisans' associations in fostering a sense of fraternity among their members. He claimed that "the most splendid results are to be observed whenever French socialist ouvriers are seen together".

Such things as smoking, drinking, eating, etc., are no longer means of contact or means that bring them together. Association, society and conversation,

for them; the brotherhood of man is no mere phrase with them, but a fact of life, and the nobility of man shines upon us from their work-hardened bodies.⁶¹

It seems likely, therefore, that Marx had not, in the summer of 1844, distinguished in his own mind artisans from factory workers -- to him they were all ouvriers or prolétaires (the terms seem to have been used indiscriminately in the French socialist literature of the period). His first year or so in Paris led him to the conclusion that the urban work-force in general, and its various socialist spokesmen, were against both laissez-faire capitalism and industrialisation, and for good reasons in each case. They all seemed to agree that the fundamental problem with capitalism -- and the ultimate reason why it was an unacceptable, inhuman system -- was that neither production nor distribution were social. Once Marx had assimilated this basic conviction, his erstwhile preoccupation with political revolution and/or reform seemed irrelevant. Obviously what was needed was a social transformation, not a mere change in the political arrangements. He now drew a sharp contrast (in his article against Ruge) between political and social revolution, and defined the latter as a protest against a "dehumanised life" on the part of industrial workers who resented their severance from the human community.⁶²

61. "Oekonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte...", MEGA I, 3, p.135; MECW, 3, p. 313.

62. "Kritische Randglossen...", MEGA I, 3, p. 22; MECW, 3, p. 205.

What role would political agitation have in this social revolution? Marx temporarily adopted the hostility of Leroux, the Saint-Simonians, some Fourierists, and some French communists to any dabbling by the workers in politics. Social distress, he suggested, by no means necessarily produced political understanding on the part of the workers. Support for republican democracy and commitment to socialism were two different things, and in practice the former was liable to hinder the latter. As proof for this claim Marx, like Leroux, pointed to the French tradition of political insurrection which had manifested itself several times in Lyon during the 1830s. The workers' movement in Lyon, he argued, was precocious politically but backward in socialist theory, and as a result had squandered its forces in "senseless, useless revolts, which (were) drowned in blood". For Marx the Lyon uprisings were in fact the first stirrings of the French proletariat, but the Lyon workers had deluded themselves into believing that they were pursuing only political aims; they thought "they were only soldiers of the republic whereas actually they were soldiers of socialism". The trouble was, explained Marx, that when the French proletariat adopted "the framework of politics" it tended to overestimate the benefits to be gained from overthrowing the current political regime, and was far too ready to resort to violence as a remedy for all social ills. This was exactly what had happened in Lyon: the workers' political radicalism had concealed from them the economic roots of their distress and

smothered their "social instinct".⁶³

Marx, then, had no time for the Babouvian tradition of political violence. This did not mean that he was satisfied with the July Monarchy, or thought that some moderate changes in the constitution would suffice. He was still in favour of political 'revolution', i.e., sweeping changes in the constitutional structure to implement the concept of popular sovereignty, but he now regarded this as a subordinate feature of the desired social revolution. Political revolution would be useless, he remarked, unless it had a "social soul". Any kind of overthrow of the existing power élite and dissolution of existing social relations would be by definition 'revolutionary', and to that extent socialism could not possibly be realised without revolution. But what was really important about socialism was not that it would tear down the existing political order, but that it would create a new social order. "Where its organising activity begins", he concluded, "where its proper object, its soul, comes to the fore -- there socialism throws off the political cloak".⁶⁴

It thus seems reasonable to conclude that Marx, during the spring and summer of 1844, derived from his reading of Buret, Pecqueur and the Saint-Simonians and from his meetings with artisans in Paris, an awareness of the 'social

63. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 20; MECW, 3, p. 204.

64. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 22-23; MECW, 3, p. 206.

problem', and in particular a sense of the severity of urban poverty, of the clash of interests between workers and businessmen, and of the psychological impact of wage-labour and unemployment on the work-force. He fused these insights with his own aversion to competition and private property, thus extending his existing antipathy to commercial capitalism to include the phenomenon of industrialisation. He had thus added a dimension to his diagnosis of the sickness of contemporary European society, had broadened his vision of the kind of social community that should replace bourgeois society, and had modified his views on how the new order would come about. Marx had, since he arrived in France less than a year before, been exposed to thought-provoking new experiences and to radically new ideas. He was beginning to 'digest' these and work out his own socialist ideology, but the assimilation process was far from complete. The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, which he drafted in the main at the end of the summer of 1844, represented his first attempt to systematise on paper his revised views. In these Manuscripts Marx employed much of the time the quasi-philosophical terminology which he and Hess had borrowed from Feuerbach, and his basic values were still those he had internalised as a student in Germany, but most of the themes he discussed and some of the tentative opinions he expressed were derived from the works of Buret, Pecqueur and the other socialists and economists he studied in these months. The

Manuscripts were thus a more concerted effort to plumb the issues he had broached in his jottings on Mill and his article in Vorwärts.

CHAPTER 7
THE PARIS MANUSCRIPTS

On February 1, 1845, Marx signed a contract with a Darmstadt publisher, Carl Leske, undertaking to write a book entitled A Critique of Politics and of Political Economy. He had conceived the project in the summer of 1844, and the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts are all that remain of his first draft. The work was planned along lines similar to Pecqueur's Théorie nouvelle, but since it was aimed at a German market, was to include also a section dealing with Hegelian philosophy and Young Hegelian political theory. The main body of the book, however, was to consist of a critical analysis of liberal economics and an attempt to outline an alternative, socialist, political economy. In the Manuscripts that have survived, Marx had largely achieved the negative half of this programme, but had done little to elaborate his constructive alternative to classical economics. He apparently abandoned the project -- only temporarily, since it did eventually bear fruit in the Grundrisse and Capital -- in 1845, when he became convinced that his knowledge of economic theory was as yet insufficient to carry

it through successfully.¹

As they stand, therefore, the Manuscripts represent a rough draft with which Marx was far from satisfied. They are repetitive and sometimes obscure, and in parts draw directly, by summary or quotation, on the economic literature which their author had just been reading. They reflect the mind of a man groping for insights and arguments which he has yet to work out fully or precisely. Not surprisingly, then, a number of different themes are muddled together in the three manuscripts. The main ones are: (i) a critique of classical economics from a moral point of view, in which the influence of Pecqueur and Buret is apparent; (ii) an un-

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1. "Contract between Marx and Leske Publishers (Darmstadt) for the publication of Kritik der Politik und National-ökonomie", MECW, 4, p. 675.

The Manuscripts have received several commentaries, although scholars so far have been concerned primarily to elucidate Marx's 'philosophical' insights into human nature and the human condition. Most of the secondary literature presents the work as developing a quasi-meta-physical theory derived from Hegel and/or Feuerbach. As this seems to me misleading I have tried in this chapter to approach the familiar but nevertheless obscure text from a different angle. For variations on the orthodox interpretation, see, among others: Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man; Caire, L'Aliénation dans les oeuvres de jeunesse de Karl Marx; Meszaros, Marx's Theory of Alienation; Dupré, Philosophical Foundations of Marxism; Tucker, Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx; McLellan, Marx before Marxism; Ollman, Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society; & John Plamenatz, Karl Marx's Philosophy of Man, Oxford, Clarendon, 1975. The most detailed explication du texte is J. Maguire, Marx's Paris Writings: An Analysis, Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 1972.

systematic discussion of a range of economic issues such as rent, capital, economic growth, machinism, wages, and prices; (iii) a criticism of Hegelian philosophy combined with some reflections on the correct methodological approach for understanding human psychology, society and history; (iv) a concerted attempt to pin down the social and psychological consequences of commercial competition and wage-labour -- the celebrated theory of 'alienated labour'; and (v) some remarks on how a socialist or communist society would overcome the 'dehumanisation' prevalent under the existing economic system.

Marx assailed classical political economy from several angles. He derived one basic line of attack from Proudhon's Qu'est-ce que la propriété? What the English liberals had done, he argued, was to formulate in abstract, general terms the regular relationships characteristic of an economy based on free competition and private property. This was of some use, but it was inadequate. To start with, it was illegitimate to assume that these generalisations were 'universal laws' governing all economic relationships no matter what type of economy or period of history. The liberal economists had in fact merely codified the "laws of estranged labour" without questioning, as Proudhon had done, the economic justification for building the economy on private property and wage-labour. Proudhon, by showing there were good economic arguments against laissez-faire capitalism, had undermined

to objectivity and exposing it as an apology for a particular economic system (free-trade capitalism) rather than a genuine 'science' of economic behaviour per se.² Marx contended, in the second place, that classical political economy was superficial: it described appearances but failed to probe the deeper forces which were at work below the surface. Further, it was a-historical, lacking any genetic explanation of the European economy's evolution from feudalism to merchant (and later, industrial) capitalism.³ He claimed that the British economists had failed to comprehend that there must be a kind of necessity determining the structure of capitalism and the way it had developed. He had no very clear idea of what he meant by this, but he did have one example in mind. Proudhon had tried, in his first mémoire on property, to demonstrate that there was an inherent 'logic' in the way the present system of property relations had emerged in the past, and also in the way in which the future concentration of capital in fewer and fewer hands would cause increasingly acute economic crises. Marx, convinced that Proudhon's 'demonstration' was a paradigm of scientific political economy, envisaged a socialist economics which would treat all economic relations (especially those between labour and capital and between capital and land) in the same

2. "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844", MEGA I, 3, pp. 92; MECW, 3, p.280.

3. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 81; MECW, 3, pp. 270-271.

manner. He therefore had a different conception to the liberals of what an economic explanation should look like: a full explanation, to his way of thinking, should show how the phenomenon in question was the product of a 'logic' that was both structural and historical.⁴ He was never to alter fundamentally this paradigm of a satisfactory explanation.

If Marx's first two criticisms of classical economics were derived from Proudhon, his third echoed Pecqueur and Buret, and he devoted more space to it. It was essentially a moral critique, in which he argued, as had Buret, both that the Ricardian ideal of a value-neutral, 'objective' science of economics was a mirage, and that the Ricardians' own version of political economy was shot through with the most despicable values. Following Pecqueur, he objected to their 'materialistic' reduction of human behaviour to "vulgar need" -- this, he maintained, betrayed a one-dimensional perspective on human nature which ignored the freedom, intelligence and creativity that separated men from animals. He denounced too their adulation of the individualistic pursuit of material self-interest. They might be correct, he conceded, in portraying this as the primary motivation of merchants and industrialists, but many workers embraced the values of co-operation and mutual aid. Moreover, whatever

4. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 81, 92, 107-110 & 121-123; MECW, 3, pp. 271, 280, 290-293 & 302-304.

they claimed, the Ricardians not only reported the realities of the capitalist system, they applauded the lust for wealth which underlay it. This came out most clearly, remarked Marx, in their approval of saving through abstinence, which presupposed a morality of asceticism and self-abnegation. He was convinced, therefore, that Richardian economics, whatever the descriptive value of its propositions, was a normative 'science', of which part of the purpose, at least, was to justify and inculcate the capitalist spirit.⁵

Not only the underlying asceticism of capitalist ethics repelled Marx but also the liberals' attempt to quantify values in monetary terms. For the classical economist, he complained, all human gratifications and motives were reducible to cash, and the only criterion of whether or not a given action was right was its profitability. Implicitly, then, liberal economics discouraged virtues like sympathy and trust because they were dysfunctional in economic terms. Apart from its injunction to abstinence, he argued, classical political economy responded to all human moral dilemmas by urging utility as the fundamental guide to conduct, and it defined utility in terms of saleability. At bottom, then, the liberals believed something was valuable if it was useful, and it was useful if it made money. Marx had no difficulty in spelling out some of the ethical implications of this attitude. Prostitution, he remarked, was then perfectly

5. *Ibid*, MEGA I, 3, pp. 122 & 129-131; MECW, 3, pp. 303 & 308-310; quotation, MEGA I, 3, p. 130, MECW, 3, p. 309.

moral, and so was the slave trade.⁶ The fact was, he concluded, that liberal political economy was based on a set of values (including thrift, sobriety, work, acquisition, self-interest, and individualism) which were contrary to true 'human' ethics.

In Marx's opinion Ricardo exemplified in extreme form this narrowly economic view of human life. For Ricardo, he alleged, nations were merely "production-shops", man a machine for consuming and producing, human life a form of capital, and economic laws blindly ruled the world. Referring to Ricardo's remark that the criterion of a nation's wealth was its net rent and profits, not the size of population supported by its industry and agriculture, Marx quoted Buret's summary of Sismondi's commentary on Ricardo's position: "In fact, says M. Sismondi (Nouveaux principes d'économie politique, t. II, p. 331), nothing remains to be desired but that the King, living quite alone on the island, should by continuously turning a crank cause automations to do all the work of England".⁷ Sismondi's point, that uncontrolled mechanisation created widespread technological unemployment and so could hardly be said to be in the interests of the average worker, had been ignored by most liberal economists who continued to blithely equate the welfare of the entrepreneurs with that of the population at large. To fly in the face of facts

6. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 131; MECW, 3, p. 310.

in this way seemed to Marx simply hypocritical. Echoing Engels' "Outlines", he suggested that political economists from Smith through Say to Ricardo and Mill had become more and more cynical. The capitalist system had grown increasingly inhumane as it developed, and simultaneously the picture of economic man in liberal textbooks had become progressively divorced from what a true human being should be like.⁸

What were the implications of all this for a socialist political economy? Marx's response was ambiguous. He believed, on the one hand, that a new science of economics was required, although this could not be value-neutral and should therefore be based on humanitarian and socialist values (freedom, equality, co-operation, brotherhood, etc.). On the other hand, he had concluded that the discipline of political economy was no more than an ideology reflecting in its concepts and assumptions the material realities of the economic system. The logical ramifications of this insight were startling. It entailed that it was impossible to 'humanise' classical political economy, which meant that Sismondi's and Buret's programme of creating an ethical social science which could be used to keep the excesses of capitalism within bounds had been misconceived from the start. Christian capitalism, for example, would be a contradiction in terms. Marx recognised that Ricardo and his disciples had in this

8. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 108; MECW, 3, p. 291.

respect developed their science "more consistently and truthfully" than the Italian school.⁹ But then how could one reconcile the need for a socialist economics with this apparently incontrovertible argument that non-capitalist economic theory was, by definition, impossible when the economy was capitalist? Marx did not really know the answer in the summer of 1844, which is why, I suspect, he delayed writing the second part of his own book on economic theory. He was also unsure which was the best method of refuting the Ricardians: to continue Proudhon's strategy of undermining classical political economy from within by exposing its 'inner logic' and 'inherent contradictions', or to follow Buret's, Pecqueur's and Engels' method of delineating and denouncing its immoral presuppositions. As we have seen, he tried his hand at both approaches in the Manuscripts.

He also attempted to work out his views on many of the standard issues of classical economic theory: rent, wages, prices, etc. He was most interested in the problem of the movement of real wages in an industrialising economy, and his discussions of other topics were mainly subordinate to this. When drafting the Manuscripts he was researching the problem, canvassing the views of various 'authorities', rather than writing up his own 'definitive' views. He seems to have drawn mainly on the writings of Adam Smith, the Ricardians, Schulz, Pecqueur, and Proudhon, and his remarks were

sometimes inconsistent, reflecting the opinion of first one, then another, of these authors. Particularly in the first manuscript, we can follow his mind at work as he grappled with the issue, gradually perceiving its ramifications and complexity.

Marx did not approach the problem with an open mind. He brought to his investigation the general, pessimistic preconception he had learned from Buret and the other Parisian socialists influenced by Sismondi: that economic growth under capitalism meant expanding wealth for the entrepreneurs but subsistence-level wages for the workers, and that mechanisation of production brought in its train the devaluation and impoverishment of the skilled craftsman. He was not content, however, to repeat these propositions as obiter dicta. He wanted to go into the matter in depth, and explain why things had to be this way under capitalism, if indeed they did. Uncertain at first as to the dimensions of the problem, he approached it from several angles, using the various economists he had studied as 'handles' by which to seize it.

He began his inquiry by trying to pin down the general determinants of wage-levels in a capitalist economy. To attempt this was in fact to accept the validity of a-historical abstraction in the manner of Smith and Ricardo, a procedure of which he was in theory highly critical. Nonetheless, he utilised it to come up with some provisional conclusions. Wage-rates, he argued, reflected the relative economic power of employer and employee, just as rent-levels

reflected a compromise between the interests of landlords and tenants. Both landlords and manufacturers tried to force wages down as far as they could go -- lower agricultural wages meant higher rents from tenant farmers whose labour costs were reduced, and lower industrial wages of course meant higher profits for the manufacturers. There was therefore endemic pressure in a capitalist economy pushing wages towards a minimum.¹⁰

Marx recognised that the labour-force would naturally try to resist wage-cuts, and regarded a continual struggle between capitalists and workers as the normal state of affairs. In this conflict, he suggested, the employer as a rule had certain advantages. Competition for work among wage-labourers was often intense, with the labour supply exceeding demand, which made it difficult for the employed workers to force up wage-rates. Combination between employers to fix or cut wages was customary and effective, and defensive strikes were difficult to organise effectively because trade-unions were illegal and the hardships of strike-action were most painful for the strikers and their families. In a strike-situation, the capitalist had the resources to outwait the workers, while the latter were soon reduced to starvation, having in most cases no alternative sources of income. All this meant, in Marx's view, that the odds were

10. Ibid. MECA 1 3 22 30 & 73. MECU 3 22 275 & 267

stacked heavily in favour of the employer, and that in the "antagonistic struggle between capitalist and worker...victory goes necessarily to the capitalist".¹¹

Following Adam Smith, he deduced that if manufacturers constantly strove to reduce wages to a minimum and won most industrial disputes occasioned by wage-cutting, then wages would, in general, decline to a subsistence minimum and stay there. The reason they did not fall beyond this point was that they had to be high enough to keep alive an adequate supply of workers and their families. He accepted Smith's claim that in this respect labour was a commodity like any other, the production of men being governed by the demand. Echoing Smith's own words, he concluded that "the ordinary wage...is the lowest compatible with common humanity, that is, with cattle-like existence", adding that if the supply of labour greatly exceeded the demand, then not only would the employed receive merely subsistence wages, there would also be a pool of unemployed reduced to beggary or starvation.¹²

Marx, then, began by accepting the Smithian 'iron law' of wages in its simplest form, and appears to have drawn from The Wealth of Nations an 'absolute impoverishment' thesis concerning the long-term fate of both urban and rural wage-labourers. He recognised, however, that in reality --

11. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 39; MECW, 3, p. 235.

12. Ibid.

-- for example in Paris in 1844 when a partial recovery of the French economy was taking place -- wages did not appear to move in a uniform decline. He also perceived that because prices fluctuated, there was a difference between monetary wages and real wages. Did rises and falls in monetary wages and prices disguise a downward trend in real wages, he wondered? To answer this he set about analysing the effects of price fluctuations on real wages.

Prices, he remarked, were much more volatile than wages, and he suspected that by and large this difference was detrimental to the worker. From his Parisian acquaintances he had heard about the phenomenon of hoarding, and he also knew about the effects of speculation on prices from his study of the French Revolution. He argued that when, because of such speculative hoarding or simply because of an imbalance between supply and demand, the market price of a commodity rose above its 'natural' price, the worker who needed this commodity would lose out in the short run. Eventually, though, an increase in the price of provisions would be compensated for by an increase in wages, so inflation should not make any difference to the long-term movement of real wages. What about the opposite case, when prices were falling? The introduction of new machinery, he admitted, could lead to a situation where the economy was expanding but prices were declining on average. This would lead to a com-

counteracted by an increased demand for labour in the booming economy, and if monetary wage-rates remained the same while prices were falling, this would entail a rise in real wages. Yet, Marx believed, the tendency for prices to be inflated through speculation or the inefficiency of the market system was endemic in a capitalist economy, so this factor might again balance things out. Following Adam Smith, he suggested that there seemed to be a compensatory mechanism which naturally came into play and tended to restore the status quo ante. He thus decided that price fluctuations made no substantial difference to the movement of real wages, and could not be invoked as either causing or disguising long-term movements in real wages.¹³

His discussion of prices raised in Marx's mind the question: what effect did the 'health' of the economy have on wage-rates? Would real wages fall irrespective of whether the economy was in a boom or a slump? Or would this alter the balance of power between employers and employees? He again drew on The Wealth of Nations to sketch the fate of wage-labour in three kinds of industrial economy: one that was in recession, one that was expanding, and one that had settled down in a 'static' state. According to Smith, he noted, an economy in decline would mean deteriorating real incomes for all sections of society, but the workers would be in a bad bargaining position and would endure a dispro-

13. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 40; MECW, 3, p. 236.

portionate amount of the suffering. In a stagnant economy, i.e., one that had reached the replete state of zero growth predicted by Smith, the situation would be nearly as bad. The problem here was that high profits and high wages could be extracted only from a "state of growing, advancing wealth", so that even in a country which had "acquired a full complement of riches" there would be a low surplus of capital available to pay workers and construct new plant. In consequence, despite the great wealth of the country as a whole, the work-force in the factories would be reduced to a minimum level of subsistence through the twin pressures of unemployment and population growth.¹⁴

During periods of recession and stagnation, then, the outlook for the industrial worker was bleak, and there seemed good grounds for holding that the 'absolute impoverishment' thesis applied without qualification in these cases. But, Marx acknowledged, the British gross national product had expanded remarkably as a result of industrialisation, and so far such periods of depression had been relatively brief, if cataclysmic, interludes between periods of growth. Could it not then be argued, as many liberal economists did, that growth was the answer to the problem of working-class poverty? Did not the workers derive some benefit from industrial expansion, and so enjoy higher real wages in an expanding economy?

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In Marx's view the question was not as simple as that. It was true enough, he commented, that in an expanding economy profits could be made with ease, and this resulted in competition between capitalists for the available work-force. The demand for workers then exceeded their supply, and wages rose. This was in the main beneficial to the work-force, although the factory hands, in order to reap full benefits from a favourable situation likely to be temporary, were forced to work excessive overtime harmful to their health. On the other hand, Marx argued, economic expansion was dependent on an increased rate of capital accumulation which in turn reflected an increased rate of profit. Profits were always made at the expense of wages, so economic growth entailed a more intense exploitation of the worker, or (in Marx's words) that "more and more of his products are being taken away from (him), that to an increasing extent his own labour confronts him as another man's property, and that the means of his existence are increasingly concentrated in the hands of the capitalist".¹⁵ Wages might rise, then, but they would do so at a much slower rate than was warranted by the extra wealth being created by the workers.

Increased exploitation was not the only deleterious result which Marx detected in economic growth under capitalism. Capital accumulation also sharpened the division of labour and speeded up mechanisation. For the worker this

15. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 41; MECW, 3, p. 237.

meant less opportunity for craftwork and heavier dependence on "one-sided, machine-like" wage-labour which depressed him "spiritually and physically" to the condition of a machine. It also brought greater reliance on entrepreneurs for work, leaving him exposed to the danger of technological unemployment and dependent on "every fluctuation in market price... and on the whims of the rich".¹⁶ Furthermore, the expansion of the factory system combined with the concentration of capital in the hands of a few very wealthy men, would result eventually in masses of workers vying with each other for employment by a small group of big businessmen possessing vast capital reserves for mechanisation. This would be a bargaining situation unfavourable to the workers, and if the demand for labour should lag, a section of them would fall into abject poverty.

Marx thus maintained that sooner or later the benefits to the worker of economic growth would be counteracted by other side-effects of this expansion. Growth meant capital accumulation, capital accumulation meant mechanisation, and mechanisation meant technological unemployment and the destruction of the workers' temporarily favourable bargaining position. This was the sequence of events Marx had in mind when he repeated on several occasions that the worker's own labour was the source of his own immiserisation.¹⁷

16 Ibid. MEGA I 3. n. 42. MEGA II 3. n. 238.

Ultimately, he argued, citing Adam Smith as his authority, technological progress benefited only the capitalist, increasing profits but not real wages. He summed up the adverse effects of rapid capital accumulation and machinism in the following grim terms:

Hence even in the condition of society most favourable to the worker, the inevitable result for the worker is overwork and premature death, decline to a mere machine, a bond servant of capital, which piles up dangerously over and against him, more competition, and starvation and beggary for a section of the workers.¹⁸

This was Marx's long-term prediction. Nevertheless he had, although he chose to ignore it when penning this summary, recognised that the workers (presumably both wage-labourers and artisans) would benefit financially in the short run from growth although at some cost in physical strain and mental stress. The immediate results of a revival in the European economy, he had admitted, would likely be a rise in real wages albeit accompanied by an even more rapid rise in profits and gross national product.

Marx's second approach to the problem of wage trends was thus slightly more concrete and historical than his first, but his method was still essentially deductive and a priori, in the vein of classical political economy. His conclusions, too, had been much the same, at least as regards long-term trends. His closer examination of an expanding economy had not led him to abandon his 'absolute impoverishment' thesis

18. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 42; MECW, 3, p. 238.

and doctrine of subsistence wages. But it had shown up the difference between the short-term and long-term results of growth, and it had also demonstrated the crucial role played by the labour supply/labour demand relation in determining the level of real wages. His 'subsistence wage' doctrine was clearly premised on the assumption that the labour market would normally favour the capitalist, which in turn assumed that booms would either tail off rapidly or would stimulate such a rate of investment in labour-saving machinery that technological unemployment would outweigh the increased demand for workers.

Marx made these assumptions quite casually, without defending them, or even seeming to realise that they might be unreasonable. He was aware of the unemployment problem in Paris and in the English manufacturing towns, and it seemed to him intractable, a permanent feature of the new economic regime. Also, he was influenced in a vague way by the prevalent interest in Malthusian population theory. While he did not agree that over-population was 'natural' and inevitable, he did accept that the current mode of organisation of the economy had caused a de facto population problem which apparently could not be solved under capitalism. So it seemed eminently reasonable to Marx in Paris in 1844 to expect that supply of labour would exceed demand except in brief, temporary boom periods which would not affect the long-term level of wages. Exceptions to subsistence level

Still, Marx felt he had given a hostage to his enemies the liberal economists by admitting that, under certain circumstances, real wages would rise. He therefore looked for a way to cover his flank, and also for factual data to test his theoretical analyses against reality. He found both in Wilhelm Schulz's Die Bewegung der Produktion.¹⁹ If he had taken his 'absolute impoverishment' thesis from Smith, he derived from Schulz's book a 'relative impoverishment' thesis which was, strictly speaking, incompatible with it, but which he adapted to his own purpose. Schulz's work was in part an analysis of the consequence for the work-force of the mechanisation of English factory production. He had concluded that technological change benefited skilled workers, whereas it left the wages of unskilled manual labourers or machine minders much the same as before. This meant that a fairly small élite of men possessing new industrial skills had emerged, and some craftsmen of the old type had also prospered, producing a working-class divided into an 'aristocracy' which was better off than ever before, and a mass of unskilled labourers who remained at around subsistence level. Schulz thought the living standard of this majority had probably declined somewhat due to rising prices, and he believed their situation was worse too on account of longer working hours and lessened security of employment. But he admitted that,

19. Wilhelm Schulz, Die Bewegung der Produktion, op. cit.

in monetary terms, the slight decline in real wages experienced by this group was far outweighed by the large rise in incomes enjoyed by skilled workers. His overall conclusion was thus that average wages had risen substantially as a result of mechanisation, but he rightly pointed out that this 'average' was merely a statistical device and was misleading given the sharp distinction between skilled and unskilled.

Marx, who was most interested in the fate of the 'typical' (unskilled) workers who made up the majority of the new factory 'proletariat' in England, read Schulz as confirming that the real wages of these wage-labourers were declining. But he was even more impressed with the other argument Schulz offered in support of the 'impoverishment' case. Even if one accepted that the industrial worker's average wage had risen, Schulz maintained, the fact was that the percentage rise was substantially inferior to the percentage rise in the income of the upper and middle classes. Income differentials between classes had therefore increased, which meant that the contrast between wealth and poverty stood out more sharply as a result of industrialisation. He pointed out that as total production rose in an economy, desires and claims of consumers also rose, leaving the poorest sector of the population with even more unsatisfied needs. Hence, he asserted, "relative poverty" could increase while "absolute poverty" diminished: indeed this was currently

economy was "forging ahead".²⁰

Marx endorsed Schulz's conclusions and quoted them at length in the Manuscripts. He thus advanced both the 'absolute' and 'relative' impoverishment arguments, a singular example of trying to have one's cake and eat it. He could have stressed Schulz's skilled/unskilled distinction, and retained the 'absolute impoverishment' argument for the latter alone; but this he did not do. Rather he seems to have employed Schulz's 'relative impoverishment' thesis as a way of plugging the apparent hole in the crude 'immiserisation' theory he had taken from Adam Smith -- it was a way of covering all contingencies and demonstrating that the industrial worker (no distinctions made within the class) would necessarily be impoverished in some form no matter how fast the economy grew. His recourse to Schulz indicates, however, that the hard fact that some workers (at least) did partake of the benefits of industrial growth had stuck in his mind as a datum which was prima facie at odds with the 'iron law' of wages, and had to be got around or explained away in some fashion if one was to adhere to the doctrine in all good conscience.

Marx's analysis of wages in the Manuscripts had all the faults of a first stab at a tricky problem -- it was

20. Ibid, pp. 65-74 (quotation, pp. 65-66). Marx quoted extensively in the "Manuskripte" from these pages of Schulz's work, MEGA I, 3, pp. 46-49; MECW, 3, pp. 241-243.

repetitive, fragmentary, and in places muddled. Ultimately, too, it was inconclusive. He ended by half accepting and half discarding the Smithian 'iron law' of wages. As we have seen, for the all-important case of an expanding economy, he had abandoned the 'subsistence wages' argument as inapplicable in the short run, but had suggested that it still held good in the long term. This sounded rather weak, the conclusion of an author who was determined, notwithstanding the evidence on wage-trends, to argue that the urban work-force as a whole was in no way a substantial beneficiary of industrial growth. The truth was that Marx's analysis of wages was neither clear nor dispassionate. It was influenced by his emotional conviction, derived mainly from Buret and Pecqueur, that the ouvrier (a term he used on several occasions in the Manuscripts) was progressively "devalued" and "impoverished" by machinism. Moreover, despite his extended discussion of wages, he was less concerned with the material condition of the urban workers than their psychological and moral state. But he was reluctant to admit that this "dehumanisation" might in fact have been accompanied by a rise in living standards.

Alerted by Buret to the problem of machinism, and convinced by him that factory work was ruining the health and morals of the English worker, Marx wanted, in addition, to predict other results of industrialisation. As we have seen, he expected that rapid technological change would,

in favour of the employer, thus causing mass unemployment and a return to subsistence wages. He was, however, aware of the liberal economists' counter-argument that mechanisation of production, by drastically lowering prices, would create new mass markets and hence a vast new demand for labour. To the extent that this was true, he mused, modern industry would become increasingly dependent on a mass domestic market of poor consumers. If so, the expansion of the economy would be limited by the low level of effective demand in this working-class market. He mentioned this Sismondian thesis of mass under-consumption in the Manuscripts, but did not elaborate on its economic implications. He contented himself with the observation that, notwithstanding the relatively small incomes in the hands of lower-class consumers, industrial capitalism was premised on the exploitation of their existing needs and the creation of new, artificial ones. The paradox of the system, he commented, was that it resulted in a simultaneous reduction and multiplication of needs. It supplied the workers with 'sophisticated' and 'artificial' gratifications (Marx was presumably thinking of liquor and entertainments), while denying them, or making them pay exorbitant prices for, basic 'natural' requirements like fresh air and clean housing. As a result it perverted or 'barbarised' working-class life, and even if the urban factory-workers' monetary incomes were higher than the semi-skilled artisans of rural domestic manufacturing, their actual conditions of life (such as housing, diet, and basic amenities

like light, air, and park-land), were much inferior. 'De-humanisation', he emphasised, could not be measured in purely monetary terms -- to evaluate the fate of the 'proletariat' solely by examining wage-rates was to commit the same mistake into which classical political economy had fallen.²¹

Marx was also aware of Proudhon's claim that, in an economy founded on private property and unearned incomes, the mass of producers would ultimately be unable to buy back with their wages all the goods they had produced. This argument, if valid, suggested that the double-sided problem of over-production and under-consumption was inherent in a capitalist economy, and that some form of economic collapse or stagnation was inevitable in the long run. He was familiar, too, with Considerant's explanation of cyclical trade recessions as recurrent over-production crises, and he had recently found this theory repeated by Buret, who had borrowed it from Sismondi. But despite his awareness of the potential difficulties which mass under-consumption would cause an expanding capitalist economy, he apparently did not accept the Sismondian/Proudhonian explanation of depressions. His own discussion of periodic crises relied heavily on Pecqueur and Schulz, who (like the Saint-Simonians he had also recently read) offered accounts which focussed on the 'anarchy' of the free-market.

21. Marx. "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte...".

Marx quoted both Schulz and Pecqueur at length on the topic of crises. Pecqueur's analysis was the simpler of the two, stressing the manufacturer's ignorance of the real demand for his goods and the actions of other producers of the same commodities. Buying and selling in the free-market was largely a matter of chance, he asserted, and the inevitable results were "bankruptcies occurring constantly and universally; miscalculations, sudden ruin and unexpected fortunes, commercial crises, stoppages, periodic gluts or shortages; instability and depreciation of wages and profits, the loss or enormous waste of wealth, time and effort in the arena of fierce competition".²² Schulz's explanation was more specific, although he too stressed the periodic imbalance between supply and demand. He pointed to mechanisation as the crucial factor which had exacerbated a normal characteristic of capitalism, transforming it from an irritant into a social disaster. Illustrating his theory with the example of the English cotton industry, Schulz maintained that growing competition among industrialists had resulted in a falling rate of profit relative to the quantity of goods produced, a fact which stimulated the "cotton lords" to expand production even further in an effort to maintain their absolute volume of profits. In consequence, various sectors of the cotton industry were unable to dispose of their stocks, bankruptcies

22. Pecqueur, *Théorie nouvelle*, p. 416; quoted by Marx in the "Manuskripte", MEGA I, 3, p. 63; MECW, 3, p. 256.

had followed, and the entire industry had succumbed to a wave of panic. Wildly fluctuating prices and share-values had ruined some manufacturers, and forced others to temporarily shut down plants or cut their work-force. Schulz's explanation thus combined a stress on the unplanned nature of production (the cotton manufacturers had no idea when the market would be saturated) with the theory that over-production was a response to a falling rate of profit.²³

Marx seems to have accepted both these accounts. He was apparently convinced that there was inherent in industrial capitalism a tendency to over-production, and he looked on the free-market distribution system as the reason why the surplus of commodities was detected only when it was too late to avoid a slump. He agreed with Schulz's 'falling rate of profit' theory which he had also found in The Wealth of Nations. "With the increase of capital", he noted, "the profit on capital diminishes, because of competition. The first to suffer, therefore, is the small capitalist".²⁴ The declining rate of profit, then, by sharpening the rivalry between firms, hastened the decline of small business and the concentration of capital in the hands of a few big businessmen. It also meant the gradual demise of mere rentiers and landowners living off rent. Capital accumulation,

23. Schulz, op. cit., pp. 40-41 & 58-63; quoted by Marx in the "Manuskripte", MEGA I, 3, pp. 60-62 & 65; MECW, 3, pp. 254 & 258

he predicted, would eventually lead to a fusion of large landowners and the most powerful industrial capitalists into a tightly knit economic élite controlling all production through a few monopolies. The capitalist society of the future would thus consist of two classes: a 'grande bourgeoisie' and a 'proletariat' of factory labourers. It would be a society exhibiting tremendous extremes of wealth and poverty, and one in which the labour-force would be reduced to utter slavery. All these consequences, claimed Marx, were entailed by the mechanisation of production under an economic regime based on private property and competition.²⁵

Marx thus seems to have believed, when he wrote the Manuscripts, that while the anarchy of the capitalist market and the falling rate of profit due to mechanisation would combine to produce periodic over-production crises, these crises would not bring about an early collapse of the economic system. He had already come to the tentative conclusion (derived mainly from Schulz) that industrial capitalism would evolve into monopoly capitalism, and gradually create a two-class society. He was, in short, already sketching some aspects of the pattern of capitalist economic development which he was, two decades later, to expound in Capital. But his analysis, if it deserves to be called that, was speculative and fragmentary, a loose weaving together of points which appealed to him in the writings of (mainly)

25. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 75; MECW, 3, p. 266.

Smith, Schulz, Buret and Pecqueur. As far as economic theory was concerned, the Manuscripts were a rag-bag of insights, sometimes partially fitted together, but lacking overall coherence. Marx had not, in the summer of 1844, worked out his own system of political economy, although he did already possess some guiding ideas on the subject.

Nevertheless, Marx had begun to be fascinated by economic problems in their own right. He came gradually, as he pursued his economic studies in the next couple of years, to regard himself first and foremost as an economist. When he wrote the Manuscripts, he had not proceeded that far with this general re-orientation of his intellectual outlook. But he had already ceased to think of himself as mainly a philosopher. He was now primarily interested in problems of social psychology, and was beginning to recognise that a more empirical approach was required to solve them than either traditional or Young Hegelian philosophy could provide. He had framed in his mind the big question he wanted to answer: "How and why does the present economic regime dehumanise mankind?", and he knew that to tackle it successfully he would have to draw on economics, psychology, and social theory. What was required, he concluded, was a comprehensive new 'social science'. This intellectual programme, of course, he had found canvassed by Pecqueur in the Théorie nouvelle, and it seems to have been Pecqueur

won him over to it. To label the Manuscripts 'economic and philosophical', then, is something of a misnomer because Marx apparently envisaged them as an essay in the new normative 'social economy' which he, Pécqueur, (and, as a matter of fact, Proudhon too), were endeavouring to create. At any rate, he devoted some important paragraphs to discussing the characteristics of the new discipline.

Marx was searching for the best method of understanding human and social problems, a method which, he had already decided, would have to avoid both the abstractness and teleology of Hegelian philosophy and the creativity-denying determinism of positivist behaviourism. He now tried to explain what was wrong with each of these approaches, decrying the one for excessive 'idealism' and the other for crude 'materialism'. Tackling the problem of German philosophy first, he rejected not only Hegel's system but also the 'critical' philosophy of Young Hegelians like Bruno Bauer, whom he had once regarded as his mentor. Ludwig Feuerbach was the only German theorist associated with the Young Hegelian movement whom he still respected. He was enthusiastic about Feuerbach's work partly because he accepted Feuerbach's explanation of religion as a form of human self-projection, partly because Feuerbach had virtually abandoned traditional philosophy to advocate instead the creation of a kind of sociology (he labelled it contemporary 'anthropology'), and partly because Feuerbach had, in his opinion, come out with a devastating criticism of Hegel's

'dialectical' methodology.

Marx had retained his earlier Romantic and Young Hegelian prejudices against "blind, naive empiricism". He accepted without question the need to develop an intellectual method which would enable the researcher to go beyond a mere enumeration and cataloguing of data, which was all he considered Baconian empiricism allowed. He still thought that Hegel, for all his faults, had made the most concerted and sophisticated attempt to devise such a method. He now judged Hegel's effort inadequate, even pernicious, but he thought it could not be ignored -- only by criticising the Hegelian method could one progress beyond it. Hence, he maintained, it was most important for anyone who was trying to work out a new approach to human society to define his intellectual position vis-à-vis Hegel. As he put it, one had to tackle the "apparently formal, but really vital question: How do we stand as regards the Hegelian dialectic?" This was where, for Marx, Feuerbach had made his most valuable contribution. In his "Vorläufige Thesen zur Reformation der Philosophie" and his subsequent book, Philosophie der Zukunft, he had "in principle overthrown the old dialectic and philosophy". Feuerbach, he added, was the only one who had a "serious, critical attitude to the Hegelian dialectic", and he was in fact the "true conqueror" of Hegelianism and also Young Hegelianism, which had failed to emancipate itself adequately from

What exactly had Feuerbach achieved? Marx answered that he had demonstrated that the entire corpus of German Idealist philosophy (including Hegelianism) was little more than disguised theology, and therefore should be condemned as an aspect of religious 'alienation'. He had proclaimed the need for a real science of human behaviour, and had argued correctly that the epistemological foundation of this new science would have to be a "true materialism" because "sense-perception" must be the basis of all science.²⁷ And thirdly, he had exposed the illegitimate nature of Hegel's dialectical method. Following Feuerbach, Marx tried to sketch what was wrong with the Hegelian dialectic. Hegel, he asserted, had been at his best when he wrote the early account of his system in the Phänomenologie des Geistes. This work, Hegel's greatest achievement, revealed his merits as a thinker as well as the serious flaws in his method. In Marx's opinion two things could be chalked up to Hegel's credit: his overall perspective was historical, (the Phänomenologie was really an extended essay in the history of European ideas), and he had intuited that human beings, through their labour, create their own characters, so that if their work becomes alien to them then human nature itself becomes perverted.

Marx seems to have discovered this second virtue of Hegel's only in the summer of 1844; he noted it in the third

27. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 152; MECW, 3, p. 328.

and last of the Paris Manuscripts.²⁸ He had not, I suspect, initially derived his concept of 'alienated labour' from Hegel, or even remembered this passage from the Phänomenologie when writing his Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher articles, his commentary on Mill, his article against Ruge, or even the first two of the Paris Manuscripts. His insights into the role of non-creative labour in the process of dehumanisation were largely a product of his personal observations, conversations and studies since arriving in Paris, although (as we have seen) he found Feuerbachian terminology a convenient way of expressing them. What appears to have happened is that Marx, after deciding that he had to include in his projected book a critical analysis of Hegelian methodology, dusted off his student copy of the Phänomenologie and skimmed through it, finding, to his surprise, a passage about the 'objectification' and 'estrangement' of human labour. This confirmed his opinion that Hegel had been a clever, perceptive man who had made a number of valid and significant observations about a variety of topics, but who had hidden them in abstract language and a grandiose but fundamentally shoddy speculative system. Still, before pointing out the basic flaws in Hegel's philosophical method, Marx gave credit where he felt it was due, and so acknowledged Hegel as a precursor of his own discoveries. This done, he launched into an onslaught on the method of the

Phänomenologie, denouncing Hegel's 'dialectical logic' as fraudulent, an abstract, 'alienated' way of reasoning.

The basic problem with Hegel's approach, he suggested, was that since his thinking was speculative and arbitrary it amounted to no more than juggling with ideas. Hegel had failed to come to grips with the problems of real life in a concrete and critical way because he had divorced thought from reality, in effect leaving the material world exactly as it was while playing pointless mental games in an unreal world of the imagination. Furthermore, as Marx put it, there was already latent in the Phänomenologie "the uncritical positivism and the equally uncritical idealism of Hegel's later works -- that philosophical dissolution and restoration of the existing empirical world".²⁹ In attacking Hegel's supposed "uncritical positivism" Marx did not mean to imply that Hegel had lapsed into Enlightenment scientism; rather he was asserting that Hegel's system had turned into an apology for the entire course of history, implying that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds. In attacking Hegel's allegedly "uncritical idealism" he was repudiating an interpretation of history which viewed economic changes, political decisions, institutions and religions as so many expressions of dominant ideas. Hegel had portrayed the development of the human character and the evolution of human social and economic organisations as "products of abstract

29. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 155; MECW, 3, p. 332.

mind" and "phases of mind -- thought entities". He had, as it were, taken effects for causes, and failed to recognise the dominant role in history of economic relationships (like employer/employee) and social institutions (like private property).³⁰

Marx thus had three basic criticisms of Hegel: his methodology was non-empirical, his theory of history erroneous, and his system an apology for the status-quo. He clearly thought these mistakes were interrelated, that philosophical idealism bred political conservatism and vice-versa. By contrast, he suggested, the 'scientific' outlook of a revolutionary movement would be empirical, even materialistic, finding its "theoretical base" in the movement of the economy. Since philosophy had failed to solve the real problems of everyday life, revolutionary theorists would have to look elsewhere for their intellectual tools and problems. Instead of philosophy, the new socialist 'science of man' would be rooted in a revised kind of political economy. As we have seen above, he was convinced that this revisionist economics would be normative -- a moral 'science' based on a 'truly human' ethics. He was also aware that it would require a new epistemological base, since he rejected the naive Lockean empiricism assumed by liberal economics. He therefore tried to outline the methodological and epistemological stance of his proposed social science.

In his enthusiasm for Feuerbach and his desire to emphasise the difference between his views and those of Young Hegelian 'critical' philosophy, Marx was prepared to use the label 'materialist' to characterise his new position. As he himself sensed, however, this term was misleading because it implied a closer agreement with the post-Lockean 'sensationalism' of the French and Scottish Enlightenments than was really the case. So he toyed with two other alternative labels: 'naturalism' and 'humanism'. He never succeeded, in the Manuscripts, in expressing his philosophical point of view sufficiently clearly, partly because he slipped into the abstract and woolly terminology of German Idealism whenever he tried to explain it. But two things are, I think, evident. One is that Marx was confident that he was advancing philosophically beyond both the English and German traditions, retaining the best insights of both, and creating for the first time ever a philosophy that was at once historical and practical. He claimed that "consistent naturalism or humanism is distinct from both idealism and materialism, and constitutes at the same time the unifying truth of both", and added for good measure that "only naturalism is capable of comprehending the action of world history".³¹ Second, he wanted to build his social science on the Kantian insight that human beings are both 'subject' and 'object', that is,

31. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 160; MECU, 3, p. 336.

at one and the same time natural phenomena like plants and animals and active, creative, conscious beings interacting with and transforming the 'objective' world around them. In explaining the nature of social reality, Marx argued, the sociologist or social historian would have to take both aspects of human nature into account. He would have to recognise that the Idealist school was correct when it stressed that man "posits or creates objects" and that 'reality' was thus a product of the human consciousness, but he would also have to remember that the British empiricists had a good point when they emphasised the passive character of perception and learning and understood man deterministically as the result of a multiplicity of causes. Because of his German philosophical training, Marx tended to take the truth of post-Kantian 'subjectivism' for granted (he had, for example, never seriously questioned the existence of 'free-will' or the active role of the mind in perception), so he placed more weight in the Manuscripts on the virtues of the empiricist or 'materialist' viewpoint which he had just, for the first time, come to appreciate.³² But there is no doubt that his philosophical aim was to fuse the valid insights of both Idealism and 'materialism', and that he believed that only on the foundation of such a fusion could an epistemologically sound social science be developed.

He had certainly not worked out his new epistemology in detail, and he ran into more trouble when he tried to work out its implication for the methodology of the new social science. Here he came up against the problem that causal explanations of human conduct seem implicitly to deny free-will because they apparently presuppose universal determinism. Marx was well aware of the difficulty -- he had faced it in one form in his doctoral dissertation, and had encountered it recently in his reading of Pecqueur's Théorie nouvelle. Now he had to confront it again because he wanted to outline what he meant by a truly 'scientific' approach to social phenomena.

He was more strongly attracted to 'materialism' than ever before. One reason, no doubt, was that in repudiating his former views he over-reacted, being temporarily over-impressed by the merits of the opposition case. More important, though, he had begun to feel the allure of the natural sciences -- they appeared capable of discovering knowledge that was certain and objective in a manner unattainable in philosophy. For the first time in his intellectual career he was seized by the urge to apply to society the experimental methods of physics and chemistry. Actually, his new admiration for Newtonian scientific method was not the product of any close acquaintance with scientific literature. What had really impressed him was the technology of the British industrial revolution, which he assumed (not altogether accurately) to be the fruit of recent scientific

discoveries. He had internalised Buret's contention that the new industrial technology was creating a totally new kind of world, and, if used properly, could be the means of man's salvation, the vehicle of overcoming mass dehumanisation.³³

Given his strong sense of the immense opportunities newly created by science, it is not surprising that Marx concluded that science (in the narrow usage of the term, meaning 'natural science' rather than 'scholarly endeavour') could no longer be ignored as an intellectual phenomenon. It had, he decided, proved its academic credentials by its practical achievements. But, he complained, it had been ignored or misunderstood by the traditional disciplines of philosophy and historiography. Despite the recent vogue for Naturphilosophie (which he described as a "chimerical illusion"), philosophy had remained "alien" to the natural sciences, whereas historiography merely mentioned them occasionally as a useful force for enlightenment, concentrating on a few special great discoveries. This, he argued, was just not good enough; it was high time that science was accepted as one of the most important factors in modern life, and its methods and results should be integrated with traditional learning. The old-established disciplines, he hinted, would find that they had been missing a great deal if they took the trouble to open their eyes to the new ideas. Like the

Saint-Simonians he was aiming for a single, unified corpus of knowledge. "Natural science", he predicted, "will in time incorporate into itself the science of man, just as the science of man will incorporate into itself natural science: there will be one science."³⁴

Marx was especially interested in the field which would now be called social psychology. What was needed, he asserted, was a new, thoroughly empirical psychology. This would approach the study of the human mind historically, and would comprehend human nature as a product of the evolution of human society. It would then be evident that the question of 'human nature' should not be treated, as it had been to date, as a theoretical or 'philosophical' issue, but rather as a "real problem of life" requiring empirical observation and historical research. The most fertile insight into human nature, he suggested, was to view consciousness as expanding together with the productivity of the economy. He summed up the key tenet of his new social psychology by remarking that the history of industry was "the open book of man's essential powers, the perceptibly existing human psychology".³⁵ The correct road to understanding the mind of modern man thus lay in the study of economic history. He was already suspecting that ideas were derivatives of more fundamental, economic phenomena.

34. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 123; MECW, 3, p. 304.

35. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 121; MECW, 3, p. 302.

His new developmental view of human nature was probably suggested to Marx by the different theories of 'progress' he had encountered in the writings of Leroux, Considérant and Pecqueur. It faced him with the same dilemma that had confronted Pecqueur. While he now thought that human character should be understood as constantly changing, a by-product of natural and social forces that were themselves continually evolving, he still wanted to retain his older, static notion of an 'essential' human nature, a conception which reading Feuerbach had recently reinforced. His image of man was thus ambivalent in the Paris Manuscripts. Most of the time he was still working with his old 'fixed-nature' theory, and he normally assumed that man naturally possessed (or should possess) a co-operative, creative, 'social' nature which had regrettably been undermined first by the growth of commercial capitalism and later by the spirit of industrialism, whereas he only sketched his newer ideas on a couple of occasions. So notwithstanding his fresh -- or refreshed -- historical awareness, he had not, on balance, come as yet to an 'existential' view of man as forever redefining his own nature. But the seeds of such a view were present in the Manuscripts.³⁶

Yet if Marx had a new sense of the economic and social forces which had stimulated the development of the human mind, he was still loth to view man in purely deterministic

terms. He rejected any totally 'materialist' or 'behaviourist' explanation of human conduct. Attempts to explain the wealth of human achievements as mere responses to "vulgar need" were misleadingly incomplete, he argued, because they neglected the vital factor of human creativity, and this could not be explained in terms of causal determinism. He thus preserved his early Romantic commitment to free-will and artistic creativity, but at the expense of backtracking on his stated belief in the applicability of the methods of natural science to social phenomena. He played around with this dilemma in the Manuscripts, but was unable to resolve it.³⁷ As a result his views on 'scientific' methodology remained, like Pecqueur's, ambivalent.

Marx asserted bluntly that the human race was regressing to a more primitive era than the Stone Age because modern society was decadent, and human nature degenerate. The task of his new social psychology/political economy was to explain why this was happening, and to indicate how it could be stopped. He therefore began to fulfill his own programmatic demand for a socialist social science by studying the psychological and social effects of commerce and wage-labour. The fruit of this inquiry was his famous theory of alienation. This concept has been the subject of numerous commentaries, most of which were redundant, so I shall make no attempt here to redescribe his views. But since much of the secondary

37. Ibid.

literature on the subject is misleading, a few remarks are unavoidable.³⁸

Marx's notion of alienation was diffuse. He used it to bring together, under one conceptual umbrella, several different social phenomena he abhorred. 'Alienation' was thus as broad in scope as the general term he had employed previously to designate the fundamental social problem of the age: 'dehumanisation'. It meant much the same, except that 'alienation' was more closely tied to economic phenomena. Therefore, if one is looking for the intellectual antecedents of Marx's theory one should go back to two parallel sources: German Romantics like Schiller and Hölderlin, and the French 'pre-Romantic', Rousseau. Marx was influenced by intellectual traditions proceeding from both sources: in the French case by Rousseau himself and by French socialists drawing on Rousseau (Leroux and Pecqueur are the best examples), in the German case by Goethe and Schiller, 'second-generation' Romantics like W. Schlegel, Hölderlin and Hegel, the Young Hegelians, and Feuerbach. As I have suggested above, his

38. On this topic the most comprehensive compilation of Marx's statements has been made by Meszaros, op. cit., while Ollman, op. cit., is also useful. Tucker, op. cit., is a well-known but eccentric commentary. Much of the secondary literature on Marxian 'philosophy' is centred on this issue, for example, Fromm, op. cit.; Calvez, op. cit.; Caire, op. cit.; Dupré, op. cit.; Henry J. Koren, Marx and the authentic man, Pittsburg, Duquesne U.P., 1967; & John Lewis, The Marxism of Marx, London. Lawrence & Wishart. 1972. For a critical sur-

specific debt to Hegel's concept of 'self-alienation' was probably fairly slight, and while he almost certainly took the term 'alienation' from Feuerbach, he transformed the content substantially, giving it a socio-economic rather than a religious referent. When Marx read Rousseau carefully (at Kreuznach) he was already employing the notion of 'dehumanisation' as a basic category, so Rousseau evidently did no more than reinforce a perspective that he already possessed. From his observations as Rheinische Zeitung editor and his reading of Rousseau and Proudhon, however, he came to the conclusion that private property was a leading feature (both cause and symptom) of 'dehumanisation', and he seems to have focussed on commerce as a vital corrosive force soon after arriving in Paris, as a result of the influence of Hess, Blanc, Leroux, and Considerant. In short, the socio-economic content of Marx's version of 'alienation' gradually took shape between the end of 1843 and the middle of 1844. If one is interested primarily in the general idea, then one should stress its antecedents in German Romanticism, while if one is more concerned with its empirical content, then one should look to the French socialists as the primary source.

One further comment about Marx's alleged debt to Hegel on the alienation issue. Although his conception was general in scope, he applied it to modern Europe only, in particular the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He did not see 'alienation' as endemic to the human condition but, on the contrary, as a product of comparatively recent social

and economic change. In this respect his use of the term differed radically from Hegel's, for whom the entire onward march of Spirit was a process of 'self-alienation' (i.e., the 'objectification' of 'Nations' as successive forms of socio-political organisations or 'States'). To be sure, Hegel did also use the term in the Phänomenologie to refer in addition to men's 'objectification' of their personalities in artifacts (in the passages on which Marx commented in the Manuscripts), but here again in the Hegelian system this kind of 'alienation' was universal and inevitable, merely a way of describing a permanent and necessary aspect of reality, with no pejorative connotations. In a word, 'alienation' was for Hegel inherent in human nature and human society, a general characteristic of the historical process, whereas for Marx it was a relatively modern phenomenon with a number of specific socio-economic causes.³⁹ For this reason it is misleading to emphasise too much the continuity between Hegel's and Marx's usages of the word.

A word, too, on the claim that 'alienation' was ^{ss} essentially a philosophical or even religious concept in the Manuscripts. To suggest that Marx was really a religious thinker seems perverse given his militant atheism, unless one means to imply by the label merely that nineteenth century ideologies like Marxism functioned as secular substitutes

39. Hegel, Die Phänomenologie des Geistes, op. cit., passim,

for Christianity. Marx did, of course, borrow the term 'alienation' from Feuerbach, and Feuerbach was a kind of theologian, but it is necessary to remember that (a) Feuerbach's theory of religious alienation was intended as an 'exposure' of Christianity as mythical and, in a sense, fraudulent; and that (b) while Marx accepted Feuerbach's theory, he had already relegated it to a minor role within the general explanation of 'dehumanisation' -- indeed, he interpreted religious 'alienation' as no more than a side-effect of more fundamental social and economic phenomena. Marx, then, was not only anti-religious, he was becoming less and less interested in the religious question. He regarded it as significant only in 'backward' Germany.⁴⁰

The claim that 'alienation' was primarily a philosophical concept seems more plausible, but only because of the vagueness of the term 'philosophy' if left unqualified. There is a legitimate common usage of the word to refer to a cluster of values or beliefs, a kind of 'world-view'. In this sense, everyone has a 'philosophy of life'. Marx's theory of alienation was a 'philosophy' in this loose usage because it summed up his general perspective on modern life. It is also true that in the Manuscripts Marx discussed problems of epistemology and scientific method which are usually

40. This was one of the main themes of his Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher articles, and was assumed in the "Manuskripte". For an example of the thesis that Marx's theory of alienation was philosophical and quasi-religious, see Tucker, op. cit., passim.

reckoned as falling within the normal subject-matter of philosophy as an academic discipline. In this sense too he was a philosopher and the Manuscripts (though not the theory of alienation per se) were philosophical. So far, so good. But it is not legitimate to infer from these things that Marx still espoused a philosophical system like Spinoza's or Plato's, or even worse, that the theory of alienation was such a grandiose system. Above all, one must avoid the misleading inference that Marx still accepted some variant of Hegel's philosophy or Young Hegelianism. To be sure there were some remnants of his Berlin period still evident in his thought, but in fundamentals he had broken from Hegel at Kreuznach (if not before). He reaffirmed this break in the Manuscripts, and also severed his intellectual ties with Young Hegelian philosophers like Bruno Bauer, sneering at them as epigones of Hegel who had failed to grasp the elementary errors in his work. As I have shown above, he intended his theory to be empirical and 'scientific', a contribution to the projected new science of 'social economy'. He designed it as an interdisciplinary fusion of social psychology and economics, and went out of his way to differentiate both his method of inquiry and his concept of 'alienation' from Hegel's. And he declared categorically that his insights could not be discovered or comprehended through the "pure theory" of speculative philosophy. Marx thus clearly intended his theory of alienation to be psychological, sociological, and

been deceiving himself. It is possible that, despite his intentions, he in fact produced another metaphysical theory in the tradition of German Idealist philosophy. The scholarly consensus is that he did, although this has not gone unchallenged.⁴¹ To sort out this debate we must examine the phenomena to which he actually applied the label 'alienation' in the Manuscripts.

On the basis of all Marx's Parisian writings, it would appear that he saw the general dehumanisation of modern man as taking eight main forms. Some of these applied to all members of capitalist society, others affected primarily the lower classes. They were: (i) religious mystification -- the projection by men of their own qualities onto a mythical being called 'God'; (ii) political powerlessness -- the disenfranchisement of a large part of the population, and the divorce between politics and socio-economic power even where political democracy existed; (iii) isolation -- the fragmentation of the old corporate society into one in which there were no longer communal bonds welding families together into

41. On this question see, among others, Louis Althusser, Pour Marx, Paris, Maspero, 1965; Isiah Berlin, Karl Marx: His Life and Environment, N.Y., Oxford U.P., 1963; Fromm, op. cit., Roger Garaudy, Karl Marx, Paris, Editions Seghers, 1964; Karl Lowith, Von Hegel zu Nietzsche, Zürich, Europa Verlag, 1941; John Somerville, The Philosophy of Marxism: an Exposition, N.Y., Random House, 1967; and the works cited in note 38. Three useful articles on the controversy are Daniel Bell, "The Debate on Alienation", loc. cit.; Michael Harrington, "Marx versus Marx", New Politics, vol. 1 (fall, 1961), pp. 112-132; and Iring Fetscher, "The Young and the Old Marx", in N. Lobkowitz, Marx and the Western World, Notre Dame, Ind., U. of Notre Dame P., 1967.

an organic state; (iv) competition -- the commercialisation of society forced men to regard their neighbours as rivals rather than brothers; (v) poverty -- by exacerbating the income differential between rich and poor, the capitalist economy was reducing the masses to subsistence-level existence while raising their aspirations and needs; (vi) insecurity -- both commercial crises and machinism created a pool of unemployed, thus causing the work-force continual worry about the permanence of its incomes; (vii) slavery -- the subjection of the urban wage-labourers to total dependence on their employers, thus severely curtailing their personal freedom; and (viii) ennui -- the disappearance of all creativity and joy from work. Marx used the term 'alienation' at one time or another to refer to each of these phenomena, either in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher essays (in the case of the first four) or in the Paris Manuscripts (in the case of all except the first two). It would thus seem reasonable to describe, (as I have above), the theory of alienation as so wide in scope as to be simply a more socially-oriented version of Marx's earlier theory of dehumanisation.

These, then, were the main forms of dehumanisation, and Marx, not unreasonably, regarded the urban lower classes as the worst victims, especially of the last four. The second part of his theory aimed at explaining how and why this widespread alienation came about. He sought the causes partly

trial capitalism. There were, he suggested, three different mechanisms of alienation: fetishism, objectification, and wage-slavery. By 'fetishism' he meant to characterise the tendency of men to allow material things or economic laws to control their lives. The 'laws' of liberal political economy (like that of supply and demand) were 'fetishized', he suggested, when they were treated as inexorable, 'iron' laws which could never be broken or ignored. Similarly money and property became fetishes when they were worshipped as gods and made the basis of a code of 'moral' conduct. 'Objectification' occurred whenever a human being was reduced to the status of an object. This happened in the production process, he pointed out, when craftsmen were **turned into mere** machines churning out goods, and reached its apogée in factory labour with the machine-minder who was essentially no more than another cog in the machine. But it occurred in a wider sense as well, whenever a human being was treated as a commodity or a market. Workers, by selling their labour, took on the status of a 'cost-factor' in production, and were treated by employers like other cost-factors. Consumers, by buying products, took on the status of markets to be **exploited** as profitably as possible. Thus by **their contact** with commodities, both worker and consumer became **reduced to** the same ontological level. Wage-slavery was viewed by Marx as the most extreme form of alienation, and he devoted **more** time to analysing it than he did to the other two, coming

up with a multifaceted theory of 'alienated labour'.⁴²

This theory was his most concerted attempt to examine the psychological and social consequences of work in factory conditions under the capitalist system. He attacked factory work as both enslaving and destructive of the physical and mental health of the labourers. Wage-labour in modern industry, he maintained, drastically transformed the worker's life, making it repugnant to him in several ways. In the course of urban wage-labour, the paid employee became estranged from his products, the job itself, his own personality, and from other men. He termed the first of these four kinds of estrangement 'product alienation', and claimed that the factory worker, because he did not own and would probably never own the goods he was creating, came to regard them as hostile to him, objects into which he had poured part of his life but which he would only be able to reclaim, if at all, as commodities in the market-place. This sense of hostility was reinforced, Marx added, by the fact that no matter how hard the worker worked under capitalism, he never achieved more than a pittance, merely piling up more and more wealth for his employers and thus increasing his own relative poverty. In the second place, the wage-labourer was alienated from his job -- the activity of production had ceased to be enjoyable, creative and fulfilling, and had been reduced to a debilitat-

42. "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte...", MEGA I, 3, pp. 81-94, 133-135, 145-149; MECW, 3, pp. 370-282, 312-315, & 322-326.

ing, unpleasant, even painful means of satisfying basic needs for food, clothing and shelter. The urban wage-labourer thus obtained no joy from either his work or the fruits of that work -- the entire work-process had become drudgery which he was forced, by the threat of starvation, to endure.⁴³

These were points Marx had found documented thoroughly in Buret's De la misère. To them he added two more facets of alienated labour, the result of his own reflections on the impact of commercial capitalism on human values. The third form of estrangement he termed 'species-alienation'. Here he was referring to the effect of wage-labour on the worker's attitude to himself, i.e., to his own values and character. Wage-labourers, he suggested, knew that in order to survive in the capitalist jungle they had continually to look after their own interests, and adopt hard, selfish, aggressive, egocentric personalities. This they did, but reluctantly and resentfully, sensing that it was cutting them off more and more from their fellow-men. They yearned to cultivate the co-operative, social sides of their characters, but this was denied them by the realities of life and work in the factory, so they came to hate themselves, feeling a chasm between what they were and what they wanted to be. Furthermore, he continued, the ruthless competition for good jobs and housing among the lower classes created a fourth form of alienation: alienation from other men. The worker, despite

43. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 84-86; MECW, 3, pp. 372-275.

his natural urge to friendship and mutual aid, slipped into an attitude of hostility to other workers, viewing them as rivals and enemies, nothing more than competitors for the limited resources available to the work-force under capitalism.⁴⁴

Marx's theory of 'alienated labour' was thus a quasi-deterministic account of how men were ground down and transformed psychologically by material conditions beyond their power to change individually. It was the aspect of his broader theory of alienation that he developed in most detail, but it was only one of three major mechanisms through which the general process of dehumanisation operated. In addition to the psychological effects which wage-labour had on the factory hand, he argued that certain general social consequences of alienation were evident in contemporary Europe. One was the institution of private property, by which he meant not small-scale ownership of houses, farms and workshops by peasants and artisans but rather the concentration of large estates and manufacturing industry in the hands of relatively few wealthy entrepreneurs. Another was the division of labour -- the split between manual and intellectual work, and the growing fragmentation of the production process into limited tasks -- which was greatly accelerated by the factory system and the employment by one capitalist of hundreds of workers. Wage-labour in an urban setting, he added, made exploitation

44. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 86-89; MECW, 3, pp. 275-277.

of the labourer much easier, so the development of industrial capitalism had as another result the polarisation of society into exploiters and exploited, producing ultimately a two-class society in which artisans and middle classes had been reduced to the status of proletarians. Finally, he repeated, the growth of alienation in modern society was reflected in the society's dominant values. The capitalist ethic, fundamentally an apologia for avarice, was becoming widespread, and the mind of European man was increasingly permeated with selfish individualism and utilitarianism.⁴⁵

Once Marx had analysed the causes, aspects and consequences of alienation, the problem that remained was to indicate how it could be overcome in the future. He was not fully satisfied with any of the suggestions made by earlier or contemporary socialist theorists, although he acknowledged the work of several of them as moving in the right direction. The only 'utopian' precursors for whom he had real admiration were, apart from Owen and Weitling, all Frenchmen, and among them he distinguished between 'socialists' like Fourier, the Saint-Simonians and Proudhon, and 'communists' like Babeuf and Cabet. He criticised the Saint-Simonians for envisaging an autocratic society in which power would be exclusively in the hands of a paternalistic élite of industrialists,⁴⁶ the

45. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 133-135, 145-149; MECW, 3, pp. 312-315 & 322-326.

46. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p.111; MECW, 3, p. 294.

Fourierists for their narrowly agrarian outlook,⁴⁷ and Proudhon for myopically viewing the abolition of private property as a panacea which could be effected immediately and at one stroke, in a vacuum, as it were.⁴⁸ Early French communism he dismissed as "crude and thoughtless", claiming it was a primitive expression of the envy of the have-nots for the wealth of property-owners. Authoritarian and "brutish", it "negated" the personality of man "in every sphere".⁴⁹

Marx explained further his reasons for this pejorative judgment on the French communist tradition. Recently (and happily) married and now a proud father, he objected in particular to the doctrine of free love (which he ascribed to utopian communism), claiming that it would turn women into pieces of "communal and common property". This illiberal notion revealed that the early communists had not really overcome their desire for private property -- in their system "the relationship of private property persisted as the relationship of the community to the world of things".⁵⁰ He also rebuked Icarianism in particular as backward-looking. Cabet, he asserted, spent too much time searching for historical examples to prove the feasibility of a non-propertyarian society. He was advocating the recreation of a society

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid. Cf., MEGA I, 3, p. 92; MECW, 3, p. 280.

49. Ibid., MEGA I, 3, p. 111; MECW, 3, p. 294.

50. Ibid., MEGA I, 3, p. 112; MECW, 3, p. 294.

based on an ancient social ideal, but he had trouble even in demonstrating that his model had once existed. There was no need to do violence to history in this way, commented Marx, since communism was a programme for the future, and if it had ever existed before then "precisely its being in the past would refute its pretension to reality". In short, the pre-occupation of the Icarians with some mythical golden age merely indicated the immaturity of their communism.⁵¹

Given these stringent criticisms of 'utopian' communism, it is not surprising that Marx judged contemporary French socialism an advance on communism. As in his letter to Ruge in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, he argued that the Babouvian tradition, as an instinctual and extreme response to the iniquities of a society founded on private property, had a certain destructive value, but it was at best a transitional formula, preparing the way for a higher stage of humanitarian and libertarian socialism. Communism, he remarked, was the "negation" of the existing regime, and as such embodied the "dynamic principle" of the immediate future, but only because the abolition of private property was a first step along the path of discovering a genuinely human society. He reiterated that the crude communism of the Icarians or Babouvists was by no means the ultimate "goal of human development" or the eventual "form of human society".⁵² Despite

51. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 114; MECW, 3, p. 297.

52. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 126; MECW, 3, p. 306.

his disagreement with them over industrialisation and economic organisation, he was attracted more to the Fourierists' vision of human relationships in the co-operative commonwealth, and on economic matters he appears to have been most sympathetic to Pecqueur's arguments, although he had not, as yet, completely made up his mind on the economic role of the state.

To describe his own version of the ideal society, Marx sometimes employed the term 'socialism' and sometimes 'communism', but when he used the latter he carefully distinguished his own conception of genuine communism from that of his unsophisticated precursors. And although his terminology in the Manuscripts was confused and confusing, he did keep fairly consistently in mind a distinction between three types of socialist theory: (i) utopian communism (of which, as we have seen, he was sharply critical); (ii) recent and contemporary socialism (to which he was broadly sympathetic, while considering that each of the several variants was in some particular way misled or inadequate); and (iii) his own vision (labelled variously 'socialism' or 'communism'), which blended the early communist egalitarian ideal and denunciation of private property with other ideas culled from Proudhon, Blanc, Pecqueur, Saint-Simonianism, and Fourierism.

How did Marx himself conceive 'genuine', mature communism? He gave no extended account of his vision in the Manuscripts, but he did return to the topic on a variety of occasions, so some of its features emerge from an assembling of his scattered remarks. His ideal was, to start with,

libertarian, in the sense that he placed great emphasis on the independence, freedom, and personal creativity of the individual. But he also insisted that, if alienation was to be overcome, the future society would have to be a real community. By this he meant a democratic, co-operative commune in which men took an equal share in decision-making, organisation, and work. Since men would be continually working together, he expected they would learn to overcome their egoism and selfishness and cultivate instead the 'social' side of their characters, thus turning gradually into "social beings" rather than the isolated, individualistic "monads" they were under capitalism.⁵³

He further claimed that such a community would not only overcome the prevalent divorce between men and other men, it would also heal the split which had grown up between man and nature. "Social man" would be more "natural" because the new mode of co-operative production would satisfy all his natural needs without creating the kinds of artificial 'needs' induced by a profit-oriented consumer society. Only under socialism, he proclaimed, would a "complete unity of man with nature -- the true resurrection of nature" be achieved.⁵⁴ This, he explained, was why his theory could equally well be labelled 'naturalism' or 'humanism', because it aimed at a society in which man would be both fully natural and fully

53. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 113-126; MECW, 3, pp. 296-306.

54. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 116; MECW, 3, p. 298.

natural and fully human for the first time ever. He was hardly very explicit about how it would be possible to reconcile this Rousseauian vision with the complexity of an urban, industrialising nation. But vague though his ideas on the subject were, Marx had clearly succumbed to the widespread yearning for a purer, simpler life which was one facet of German Romanticism and also of early, Rousseau-impregnated, French socialism.

He had relatively little to say about the economic organisation of his community, although he did not ignore the question entirely. Pointing out the quantity and variety of human needs with which the existing system was seemingly unable to cope, he argued that it was imperative to discard quickly the present regime and substitute one which could eradicate poverty and inequality. He envisaged a socialist economy as abolishing private property (large landed estates and the accumulation of industrial capital, at least), and he clearly expected it to take advantage of modern industrial technology to expand productivity.⁵⁵ Beyond this he did not go, leaving vague (for example) the role of the state and the degree of centralised planning. He was caught between sympathising with Pecqueur's and the Saint-Simonians' stress on central planning and with the Fourierist ideal of a decentralised, loose federation of independent communes, and had not fully made up his mind on the issue.

55. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 121-123 & 127; MECW, 3, pp. 303-304 & 306.

In fact, Marx was more interested in stressing the beneficial results of the 'communitarian' mode of society on the character of the individual worker. Human nature would achieve a new richness, he predicted, because men would at last be able to cultivate the many facets of their personalities. Further, they would attain much more satisfactory human relationships. Nor would this new level of personal self-fulfilment be merely a matter of greater pleasures -- enjoyment of life would be qualitatively different. The new socialist man would expand his personality in a "comprehensive manner, that is to say, as a whole man", developing simultaneously his faculties of "seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, observing, experiencing, wanting, acting (and) loving".⁵⁶ He especially emphasised that the senses of social man would be superior to those of competitive man, a notion which he probably took from the Fourierists. Since labour would become artistic and joyous, he asserted, man would be stimulated to refine his natural sensitivity and improve his creative gifts as both thinker and craftsman. This progress could of course come about for the whole population only in a co-operative community, since under capitalism the opportunity for self-cultivation was open to the rich alone. Marx thus still shared the aesthetic and ethical ideal of the second-generation German Romantics: to create the social conditions which would best allow the

56. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 118; MECW, 3, pp. 299-300.

whole population to develop its creative talents to the full.⁵⁷ He had become firmly convinced that commercial and industrial capitalism was a barrier to cultural and moral progress, and that mankind could resume its upward march only by building a new form of society and economy favourable to personal self-cultivation. It would therefore seem reasonable to term his socialism, in the summer of 1844 at least, essentially libertarian. Once this is recognised, it is no longer surprising that the two thinkers he turned to in the fall of 1844 were Fourier and Proudhon.

Before examining what Marx found in their works, however, it might be as well to summarise briefly the main debts to French socialism revealed by the articles, notebooks and manuscripts he wrote in Paris in the summer of 1844. He acknowledged in the preface to the Manuscripts a general debt to French (and English) socialism, but failed to provide any details.⁵⁸ Had he done so, he might have begun by mentioning the evolutionary theories of history he had found in the writings of Bazard, Leroux and Pecqueur. Each of these French theorists had constructed a fairly sophisticated theory of human 'progress', working in the tradition of Condorcet but avoiding his naively optimistic and linear perspective. In Bazard's Exposition Marx had found the pregnant

57. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 120; MECW, 3, pp. 301-302.

58. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 33-34; MECW, 3, p. 232.

suggestion that the motor of this progress was conflict between two antagonistic historical forces, while in Pecqueur's treatise he offered a forthright discussion of the problem of freedom and inevitability in any large-scale historical overview. In the main, his observations in the Manuscripts were relatively a-historical (at least compared with his later works), but he was obviously searching for an alternative 'developmental' approach to social phenomena, having abandoned Hegel's dialectic. He was beginning to view human nature in evolutionary terms, and had recognised the need to study economic phenomena in a historical context, although he had not yet fully adjusted his own intellectual practice to his new theoretical convictions.

Marx's programme for a new social science, and in particular his remarks on its methodology, were to a large extent derived from Pecqueur, Buret and the Saint-Simonians. Like them he was aiming to create a comprehensive discipline which would link economic, social and psychological phenomena, and which would be non-deterministic. His critique of classical political economy, though derived in part from Engels, also drew heavily on their writings, particularly on Buret's De la misère and Pecqueur's Théorie nouvelle. He also took from French economists like Pecqueur and Proudhon some of his ideas on questions like wages and rent, and his explanation of economic crises was Saint-Simonian. Generally speaking, his overall perspective on industrial capitalism was heavily influenced by the works of French socialist

disciples of Sismondi, whereas on specific economic issues he tended to borrow more from the English liberals. He was thus incorporating Smithian and Ricardian doctrines within a French socialist over-view of the nature and problems of the economy.

Most of the Manuscripts was devoted to an analysis of the economic, social, and psychological results of commercial and industrial capitalism. Here Marx relied extensively on Buret and Pecqueur, accepting their joint contention that industrialisation under a capitalist regime meant slumps, unemployment, and subsistence wages. From their books he learned much about the 'social problem', and Buret gave him the information he required on English industrialisation, urbanisation, and the material conditions of the new factory proletariat. His analysis of the psychological and moral effects of commerce and wage-labour was also indebted to Buret and Pecqueur. It was Buret, for example, who pointed out the way in which labour had been reduced to a commodity, while Pecqueur emphasised that wage-labour was a form of enslavement which corroded the mind and morals of the industrial worker. And he followed Pecqueur in arguing, against the Saint-Simonians, that the mere re-organisation of capitalistic production and its control through a new banking system would do nothing substantial to remove the dehumanising pressures to which the wage-labourer was subject.

Finally, he seems to have found congenial Pecqueur's ideas on the fundamental correspondence between human nature

and human social organisation, and his insistence that both should be 'organic' and 'co-operative'. Roughly speaking, Marx combined these aspects of Pecqueur's communitarian vision with Fourierist claims concerning human relationships within the phalanstery. His concept of joyous work as a vehicle for personal growth had a strong Fourierist ring, as did his stress on the satisfaction of all 'natural' needs and the cultivation of all facets of the human personality. Nor should his fervent admiration for French artisans' associations be forgotten -- in Paris in the summer of 1844 Marx committed himself to the cause of the labour movement, and espoused the ideal of a socialist society made up of co-operative communes.

CHAPTER 3

ENGELS IN PARIS, AUGUST-SEPTEMBER, 1844

Engels completed his training period with the Manchester cotton firm of Ermen and Engels and took his leave of industrial England in August 1844. Now a militant socialist with friends in the Chartist and co-operative movements, he had been deeply affected by his one and a half years of observation of life in the factory towns of Lancashire. Just as important as the socialist doctrines he had picked up in England was his newly-found emotional sympathy for the cause of the labour movement. During the last six months he had been following with enthusiasm and anger the progress of the long and bitter national miners' strike of 1844 which was dragging to a painful and unsuccessful conclusion as he left the country.¹ He left England a staunch advocate of the workers' case for a greater share in political power and the wealth created by the new industrial technology. His experience in Manchester had also reinforced his contempt and hatred for commerce, the capitalist spirit, and the bourgeoisie, whom he regarded as primarily responsible for the poverty and misery he had witnessed in the

1. He reported this strike in Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England, Leipzig, Wigand, 1845, reprinted in MEGA I, 4, pp. 240-245; MECW, 4, pp. 541-546.

industrial north.

As well as passion and ideas Engels brought bundles of research materials on working-class living standards: among other things, drawings and verbal sketches of back-to-back row housing in Lancashire, local government inquiries into the causes of cholera epidemics, parliamentary commission findings on working conditions in mines and factories, issues of Hansard reporting debates on Factory Bills, newspaper clippings on pauperism and the operation of the 1834 Poor Law, and a collection of Chartist and Owenite pamphlets denouncing high prices, low wages, long working-hours, unemployment, new factory machinery, the persecution of atheists and other radicals, and the undemocratic nature of the 'reformed' English parliament. These were some of the documents from which he intended to fashion The Condition of the English Working Class, a work designed to expose the social consequences of English industrial capitalism as a sombre warning to those German entrepreneurs and government officials who were sanguinely expecting Germany to follow suit. He also carried with him two articles he had written the previous spring for the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher but which had remained unpublished because of the latter's demise: collectively entitled "The Condition of England" they described in detail the English Industrial Revolution, discussed some of the social upheavals it had produced, and analysed the quasi-democratic political system through which the ruling classes of this industrialising nation were maintaining

their power.²

Engels did not go straight back to Barmen. He stopped off for a couple of weeks in Paris to look up Hess and Herwegh, the erstwhile members of the Jahrbücher staff who had kept him in touch with French affairs by sending letters and Parisian socialist publications to him in Manchester. He also visited Marx, whose Jahrbücher articles had impressed him, and was introduced to Bakunin, who had recently arrived in Paris and had met Marx through the Russian émigré circle. Marx, he discovered, had made a number of friends among the German artisans working in the French capital, frequently attended their social and educational gatherings, and also had contacts with a semi-secret, semi-socialist political society, The League of the Just, several of the members of which were adherents of Weitling's brand of 'utopian' communism. Engels duly made their acquaintance.

Accompanied by Bakunin and Marx, he also went to a meeting of French communists, probably Icarians. Three things in particular struck him about these French ouvriers, he later reported in The New Moral World: their non-dogmatic, humanistic Christianity, their internationalism, and their contempt for the bourgeoisie. Engels also sought out the left-wing press in Paris, finding (in addition to the German language Vorwärts!) "about half-a-dozen Communist papers"

2. "Die Lage Englands" ("The Condition of England"), Vorwärts, nos 76-84, 31/8/44 - 19/10/44; MEGA I, 4, pp. 291-334; MECW, 3, pp. 469-513.

and discovering, to his disgust, that the Fourierist Démocratie pacifique was subsidised by Louis Philippe. Disturbed by the seemingly strong religious strain in certain varieties of French socialism, he was relieved to conclude that this was in most cases a hypocritical veneer; the mass of ordinary French people were in his judgement "thoroughly irreligious", and when the socialist revolution arrived in France "the first victims would be the parsons". His visit to Paris thus changed little in Engels' estimate of French socialism, except to further persuade him that contemporary Fourierists were disappointing progeny of Fourier himself.³

If Engels' contacts with Parisian socialism in the fall of 1844 were fleeting and superficial, his meeting with Marx was highly important for both men. Marx, who had thought well of the "Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy", was anxious to hear the latest thoughts of this pioneering German economist, and he read avidly the two "Condition of England" articles. Exploiting his newly-acquired influence on the editorial board of Vorwärts!, Marx had them inserted in the paper, and they appeared in weekly instalments between the end of August and the middle of October.⁴ His eagerness to see them in print was an indication of how

3. "Continental Socialism", The New Moral World, no. 15, 5/10/44; MEGA I, 4, pp. 337-338; MECW, 4, pp. 212-213.

4. "Die Lage Englands", Vorwärts!, loc. cit. The articles were subtitled: "I. Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert" ("I: The 18th Century"), Vorwärts!, nos. 70, 71, 72 & 73; 31/8/44 and 4, 7, & 11/9/44; and "II. Die englische Konstitution" ("II: The English Constitution"), Vorwärts!, nos. 75, 76, 77, 80, 83 & 84; 18, 21, 25 & 28/9/44 & 5, 16 & 19/10/44.

highly he valued them. What, then, did Marx learn from these articles? He found a lucid discussion of six main themes: the intellectual legacy of the eighteenth century, the nature of the English Industrial Revolution, the material and moral consequences of industrialisation, the appearance and reality of the English political system, the prospects for democracy in England, and the likelihood of further social upheaval in the immediate future. Several of these topics were ones which Marx himself had been pondering, and he was especially interested in what Engels had to say about the effects of machines and big cities on human beings, and the virtues of the empiricist/materialist approach to social phenomena. Engels' views seem to have made a strong impression on his receptive mind.

For Engels the world was divided into forces of progress and forces of reaction, and he saw himself as a spokesman for those who were trying to create a happier, freer, more equal and rational civilisation. He believed that at long last, after centuries of ignorance and oppression, the beginnings of a break-through had been made, and that England (and in a different, less crucial way, France too) was in the vanguard of those nations struggling to discard the prejudices and encumbrances of the past. The first significant cracks in the armour of the ancien régime, he maintained, had appeared in the eighteenth century, the epoch when Newtonian science had been assimilated by the advanced segment of the intelligentsia and applied to social problems,

When the Enlightenment had disseminated the methods and fruits of rational thought to the people, when the French Revolution had first smashed the political dominance of the privileged orders, and when, above all, the Industrial Revolution had begun to transform the entire fabric of English social life, initiating a social revolution which would eventually sweep Europe. He had little to say about the French Revolution, which he considered had proved in its domestic political achievements rather disappointing, but he was full of enthusiasm for the revolutionary power of science and industrial technology.⁵

Intellectual discovery, Engels argued, was the very stuff of human progress. It was dangerous to establish beliefs and traditions, but since even conservatives were reluctant to oppose science openly, over the centuries a body of rational and empirical knowledge had been built up. He expressed admiration for Bacon and Locke whom he believed had laid the groundwork for the flowering of natural science in the Enlightenment. Apart from astronomy and the work of Newton in optics and mathematics, he maintained, natural science had not really existed before the eighteenth century, when physics became a coherent discipline, natural history was placed on a systematic footing, chemistry was created by Black, Lavoisier and Priestly, and geography and geology

5. "Die Lage Englands: I. Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert", loc. cit., MEGA 1, 4, pp. 291-309; MECW, 3, pp. 469-488.

discarded speculative theories to develop testable hypotheses based on empirical observation. Beyond these advances in individual disciplines, natural science during the Enlightenment had gained a new methodological homogeneity because the philosophes had collated and classified earlier discoveries, thereby beginning the creation of a unified system of knowledge.⁶ Engels' overtly positivistic account of intellectual progress echoed (probably unwittingly) Comte's stress on the growing methodological unity of the sciences. His stay in England seems to have been the catalyst for a fundamental shift in the general orientation of his intellectual life. Previously, despite an interest in technological progress, he had been predominantly a Romantic. Now he had been won over to empiricism, and his respect for natural science had turned into faith in its future achievements.

In Engels' judgment, the foundations of a science of society had also been laid during the Enlightenment. Political theory, for example, had been given "a human foundation", Adam Smith had reformulated political economy, and historiography had become universal in scope. These were promising if primitive beginnings, and philosophy had also advanced under the impetus of natural science. Philosophes like Helvetius and d'Holbach had tried to develop a thoroughly

6. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 291-292; MECW, 3, pp. 469-470.

scientific world-view, opposing "subjectivity with objectivity, the mind with nature, [and] spiritualism with materialism". He suggested that this scientific materialism represented a revival of the "spirit of antiquity" against Christianity, and that it was justly combined with republicanism in politics.⁷ In his opinion the simultaneous emergence of philosophical materialism, atheism, and democratic republicanism marked the application to human affairs of a new scientific Weltanschauung fundamentally at odds with traditional culture based on religion. He believed that since the Enlightenment this new secular and scientific spirit had made headway, especially in France and England, and that the philosophical outlook he labelled 'materialism' was its most consistent expression. 'Materialism' summed up for Engels the entire intellectual contribution of the eighteenth century. It was directly linked in his mind with natural science -- he called it the "culmination of science" -- and he imbued it with all the prestige of the empirical sciences. In his vocabulary it meant more than just a metaphysical position or epistemological doctrine, it was a symbol of the hard-headed, fearless, empirical pursuit of factual knowledge. A materialist was one who ruthlessly applied the twin tools of observation and logic with utter disregard for the 'sacred cows' which his discoveries might expose to ridicule. And in his view, these 'sacred cows' would include

7. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 292; MECW, 3, p. 470.

the monarchy, the Church, and private property. 'Materialism' thus had revolutionary political overtones as well as connoting the scientific spirit.⁸

Yet notwithstanding his great respect for the Enlightenment, Engels had retained his Romantic 'prejudice' that the intellectual achievements of the eighteenth century had been one-sided, a step forward that itself had to be transcended. This was the case, he argued, in philosophy, in politics, and especially in social affairs. He believed that in the history of the human mind the Enlightenment had left unresolved a "great antithesis" between two diametrically opposed approaches to the crucial problem of man's place within the natural world. One approach was that of Helvetius and Godwin: aspiring to full 'objectivity' they treated man 'scientifically' as a phenomenon whose behaviour could be plotted and explained causally, and whose motives were calculable in utilitarian terms. The other was that of Kant and Fichte: rejecting any deterministic account of human conduct, they stressed the freedom and creativity of the human spirit, and understood morality as a web of rational choices and duties. Prima facie, suggested Engels, the two modes of vision were incompatible, even mutually destructive; nonetheless each mirrored a vital facet of the human condition, since man was indeed both an 'object' driven by natural and social forces beyond his personal control and a 'subject'

8. Ibid, MEGA A, 4, pp. 292-295; MECW, 3, pp. 470-73.

possessed of a will and the capacity to plan his life creatively. The merit -- and at the same time the demerit -- of the Enlightenment was to have set these "two sides" of the issue "against each other, fully developed and in all their sharpness, and thereby made it necessary to overcome the antithesis".⁹ Engels, too, was searching for a non-deterministic social science which would yet be thoroughly empirical in its procedures. And, like Pecqueur and Marx, he judged that if the correct methodology could be worked out, the set of unsolved philosophical problems (epistemological and metaphysical) inherited from the Enlightenment would dissolve; there would no longer exist in the consciousness of mankind a continual conflict between "substance and subject, nature and mind, necessity and freedom".¹⁰

In the field of the intellect, then, the eighteenth century had posed in acute form the major problems which the new, post-Romantic generation had to resolve. Engels thought that in France much the same was true in politics and economics. The French Revolution was in his view still incomplete: the democratic principle had triumphed only imperfectly, and real power remained in the hands of a small class of property-owners. Moreover, France had as yet experienced no social revolution -- the country was still predominantly

9. Ibid, MECA I, 4, p. 293; MECU, 3, p. 471.

10. Ibid.

rural and agrarian, and its manufacturing industries remained unmechanised. Politically and economically France had thus stopped short of the really revolutionary changes which would usher in a new era of industry and democracy. She had yet to face up to the social consequences of universal suffrage and the steam-engine, but sooner or later face them she must. He believed that the nineteenth century was bringing revolutionary solutions to these philosophical, political and social problems inherited from the Enlightenment and the Revolution. France, he asserted, would eventually undergo the social transformation experienced by England since the 1780s, and then (but only then) would she overcome the political and intellectual limitations of the eighteenth century.¹¹

In the meantime, however, France (like Germany) was consigned by Engels to the second rank. England was leading the pack, and what lay in the future for the other European nations could be observed now in Lancashire. Because she had already undergone the Industrial Revolution, England alone had a real "social history".¹² He meant by this that England was the one European country where the 'social problem' had come to dominate political and intellectual life because the pace of industrial expansion not only had made more acute the extremes of wealth and poverty but also had created an urban working-class clamouring for reform. The emergence of

11. *Ibid*, MEGA I, 4, pp. 295-296; MECW, 3, pp. 473-74.

12. *Ibid*, MEGA I, 4, p. 296; MECW, 3, p. 474.

this new class, he maintained, had transformed English social and political life. In his Vorwärts! articles he explored the transformation, to which he gave the general label "social revolution".

Well aware that the primary engine of this "social revolution" was the mechanisation of some branches of English manufacturing, Engels gave a detailed, factual survey of the British Industrial Revolution, focussing in particular on the textile industries, the mining industry, and the applications of steam-power to land and water communications. He pointed out that compared to the "antediluvian" cotton industry using 4 million pounds of cotton and based on the spinning wheel and hand-loom, the size and power of the contemporary industry, which used 360 million pounds per annum, was quite remarkable. One and a half million people now lived from it, he claimed in a tone of awe, and Lancashire and Lanarkshire were almost entirely dependent on textile manufacturing.¹³ He emphasised that the English industrial revolution was by no means confined to cotton; demand for fuel and raw-materials had mushroomed, the steam-pump had allowed a great extension of coal seams, and the new machine-building sector had stimulated in turn metallurgical industries and iron-ore and copper mining. Metal-working was now the second most important industry in England, with towns like Sheffield annually consuming tens of thousands of tons

13. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 301-302; MECW, 3, pp. 479-480.

of iron-ore and hundreds of thousands of tons of coal.¹⁴ He also quoted statistics to demonstrate the vast expansion of British road, canal and rail networks, and the growth of an important steam-ship building industry. There were thus four main aspects to the English industrial revolution: the creation of the factory system first in the textile and later in the metallurgical industries; the spin-off effect of the initial textiles expansion in the form of new industries based on modern technology (chemicals, machine-building, metallurgy, and engineering); the development of a modern mining industry; and the tremendous improvement in communications.

Engels argued that industrialisation was a self-perpetuating process, and that the consequences of an initial impetus were almost endless. Progress in one industry was communicated to others, growth in one sector stimulated the entire economy, and mechanisation quickly spread the factory system, reducing in price an ever-widening range of commodities. Cheaper consumer goods produced changes in consumption patterns, so that the new urban working population had developed a new life-style and new needs. The new needs in turn stimulated new industries, and so the cycle went on. Notwithstanding its defects -- which Engels considered were many -- he was prepared to call this ongoing industrialisation an "advance in civilisation". It was sufficiently obvious, he concluded, that everywhere the introduction of

14. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 302-306; MECW, 3, pp. 481-484.

"mechanical devices and scientific principles" had been the mainspring of progress.¹⁵

Economic growth, though, had social consequences. If Engels was enthused by technological innovation, he had also a keen sense of the sacrifices being imposed on human beings. British industrialisation, he believed, was undermining the cohesiveness of the old social order by reinforcing a social system in which status and power depended on the possession of capital and private property, and by creating a new class of propertyless wage-labourers, urban workers dependent for their meagre livelihood on factories and mines. He was convinced that the contrast -- and antagonism -- between these groups was daily more apparent as the beneficiaries of industrialisation grew wealthier and the victims more numerous. Why had the revolution in British industry produced this widening chasm? Because, answered Engels, the motive spurring on the inventors and installers of the new machines was material gain. Of course, he admitted, profit-making had been the motor of the older type of commercial capitalism too, but industrialisation had elevated self-interest to a new "position of dominance over man". Entrepreneurs had seized on the new technology, made it their own property, and exploited it to make personal fortunes. Instead of benefiting the work-force by reducing

15. *Ibid*, MEGA I, 4, pp. 304-305 & 306-307; MECW, 3, pp. 482-483 & 484-485.

working hours and raising wages, the new inventions thus became "the monopoly of a few rich capitalists" and "the means to the enslavement of the masses". Furthermore, because industrialisation had taken place within a capitalist framework, it took over in exaggerated form the worst features of commercial capitalism.¹⁶

Engels had thus come independently to some of the central insights of Marx's theory of alienation. Although he did not employ the term 'fetishism', he recognised the way in which economic laws and institutions had become 'alien' powers dominating human relationships, and he shared Marx's notion of 'reification': the reduction of human beings to the status of things (usually instruments or commodities). He also agreed that 'wage-slavery' was a thoroughly dehumanising condition. In the Vorwärts! articles he avoided detailed discussion of the physical and psychological state of urban workers, leaving this to his planned book on the subject, but he did stress the "world-historical importance" of working-class misery, and he pictured the industrial wage-earner as 'atomised' and 'alienated', the most severe victim of a 'fragmented' society permeated with self-centred individualism. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that when he met Marx in Paris, he already possessed a theory of 'dehumanisation' similar to Marx's, although he expressed it in less rebarbative language. The two men's independent

16. Ibid, MECA I, 4, p. 307; MECU, 3, p. 485.

analyses of the social and psychological results of commercial and industrial capitalism coincided almost exactly, which was why they experienced a 'meeting of minds' which was to form the basis of their subsequent friendship.

Although they agreed on this topic, on an equally important issue their views were far from identical. While Marx was ambivalent on the future role of the state in a socialist society, or even inclined to Pécqueur's brand of state socialism, Engels was distinctly hostile to government in all forms. In addition to his earlier reading of Fourier, Proudhon, and Owen, he had recently waded through William Godwin's Enquiry Concerning Political Justice. Even in his younger days as a liberal he had felt a strong antipathy towards central government interference in the daily activities of citizens -- this, it will be remembered, was what had initially weaned him away from the somewhat statist liberalism of the Young Hegelians -- and now, under the influence of Godwin, he reaffirmed the anti-étatisme of his articles on Continental socialism in The New Moral World.¹⁷ His aversion to the state was evidently no passing fad or doctrine picked up momentarily only to be discarded some months later -- on the contrary, it was a permanent part of his psychology, and ranked equally with his other bêtes noires: capitalism and Christianity.

17. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 296 & 298; MECU, 3, pp. 474 & 476. William Godwin, Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness (3rd. edit), London; Robinson, 1798.

In the Vorwärts! articles he tried to demonstrate that these three objects of his hatred were inextricably linked. He believed that egoistic individualism was the 'natural' ideology of the propertied classes because it corresponded to their material interests, providing a rationalisation for commerce and private property. But he also suggested it had gained widespread acceptance because it was the logical culmination of "the Germanic and Christian principle of subjectivity and particularisation". By this rather obscure phrase he meant the intellectual legacy of the Protestant Reformation, an outlook which (in his view) had combined a pseudo-rational theology with a highly statist political theory. Put into practice, he explained, this Weltanschauung had found expression in the European "Christian states", of which the Prussian monarchy was a paradigm. Since they embodied the same individualistic values, he claimed, there was a natural affinity between these Christian states and commercial capitalism.¹⁸ Engels had thus proved, to his own satisfaction at least, that the modern state, Christianity, and capitalism were each manifestations of the selfish individualism which was transforming mankind into "a collection of mutually repelling atoms".¹⁹ Like Marx's, his analysis of this comprehensive process of dehumanisation seemingly still had its roots in the views of Schiller and Hölderlin.

18. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 297-298; MECW, 3, pp. 475-476.

19. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 297; MECW, 3, pp. 475-476.

The English parliamentary system fascinated and repelled Engels. He used a considerable number of column inches in Vorwärts! to describe in detail the British constitution and the working of the political system. His overall judgment mingled contempt with a dash of grudging admiration for the skill with which the ruling classes manipulated the creaking and irrational machinery of government. He concluded, repeating what he had read in The Northern Star, that parliament and constitution were an elaborate façade which served merely to disguise the realities of social and political power in the country. To justify this judgment he examined what went on at Westminster, observing that the monarch was powerless, the House of Lords weak, and power concentrated in the Commons, so that England had a disguised republican regime.²⁰ But the apparently democratic nature of the lower house was equally deceptive. Although the 1832 Reform Act had supposedly reorganised the electoral system on quasi-democratic lines, cutting out pocket boroughs, corruption and other abuses, and enlarging the electorate, it had merely given the parliamentary system a veneer of rationality. In practice, he charged, the changes had been small: the countryside was still over-represented, bribery was widespread, and the vast majority of workers were excluded from the ballot. Parliament still represented property-

20. "Die Lage Englands: II. Die englische Konstitution", loc. cit., MEGA I, 4, pp. 313-316; MECW, 3, pp. 492-495.

owners only, with the middle classes now sharing the spoils with the landed aristocracy, so whichever party, Whigs or Tories, formed the government, England was really ruled by an élite. He admitted that this upper/middle-class rule was tolerated by the masses, partly through fear -- the government had shown its readiness to employ troops against demonstrators -- but partly through ignorance; the people regrettably did not as yet really understand the oppressive nature of private-property and so tolerated its "tyranny".²¹

He was scathing about the English legal system, judging it archaic, barbaric, absurd, corrupt, and class-biassed. He viewed the Common Law as a jungle of precedents and contradictions which permitted money to pervert the course of justice, and the jury system, run by wealthy magistrates and local notables, as a middle-class affair biassed against the poor. He thought the penal code extraordinarily severe, with two particularly inhumane punishments, transportation and solitary confinement, widely used. His conclusion was that the English court system existed not to interpret a rational code of justice but to act as an institutional weapon keeping the poor intimidated and subserviant.²²

He argued further that the class-bias of English justice came out clearly in the question of rights. England was the freest country in the world in theory, and rights like press-freedom, assembly, association, and Habeas Corpus

21. Ibid, MECA 1, 4, pp. 316-319; MECU, 3, pp. 495-498.

22. Ibid, MECA 1, 4, pp. 326-331; MECU, 3, pp. 506-511.

did indeed exist for the bourgeois or gentleman who possessed the money and connections to enforce them. But for the working-class they were a sham. The government had up its sleeve laws of treason, blasphemy, and libel which it invoked periodically against the Chartists and the Irish nationalists although allowing most newspapers to infringe them with impunity -- press freedom was thus a matter of "grace and favour" rather than an enforceable right.²³ As for the ancient right of popular assembly, this was limited in practice by the fact that police had the power to prohibit, interrupt or dissolve any meeting, a power frequently employed against Chartists and socialists. But English public opinion did not consider the 'birthrights' of the nation in danger, Engels remarked ironically, because "the Chartists and Socialists are poor devils and thus have no rights; no one cares two hoots about it except the Northern Star and the New Moral World, and therefore one hears nothing about it on the Continent". The Chartists, too, had been denied by the governed legal status as a lawful association, and thereby forced to operate in a semi-clandestine manner, continually circumventing the law on associations. But apart from this, he argued, the right of association, in its full extent, was a privilege of the rich, because in order to function effectively any organisation needed money, and while substantial sums were at the

23. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 325; MECW, 3, p. 504.

disposal of the middle-class Anti-Corn Law League, the Chartists and the Union of British Miners could barely scrape enough funds together to meet their minimum expenses.²⁴

Engels, then, considered the English legal system at least as fraudulent and property-oriented as the electoral system. The root of the problem, he believed, lay in the state. This was powerful enough to abuse and manipulate the political and legal institutions of the country, and because it ignored the letter and principles of the constitution, English political life had become a web of "lies and immorality", and fetishism was rampant in 'educated' society.²⁵ The message which came through loud and clear in his analysis of English political institutions was therefore straightforward. In appearance England was a land of liberty, justice and semi-democracy; in reality, beneath this liberal façade, there raged a bitter class struggle, in which, when it came to the crunch, a government of property-owners could employ law and force against the helpless working-class.

If this estimate of the realities of power in Britain was correct, it appeared that the Chartists and Owenites were battering their heads against a brick wall. Engels, however, refused to draw the pessimistic conclusion which seemed to follow from his analysis. He reaffirmed his confidence in the eventual triumph of reason and reform, predicted that

24. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 325-326; MECW, 3, pp. 505-506.

25. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 332-333; MECW, 3, p. 512.

the English democratic movement would gradually succeed, and looked forward to universal suffrage and genuine representative government in the near future. Why was he so optimistic? For one thing, he was convinced that the urban proletariat was expanding at a rapid rate and that popular demonstrations for reform would become so large and militant that the government would find it increasingly difficult to curb the Chartist movement by force and would instead make concessions. For another, he regarded the existing political system as so thoroughly fraudulent and so obviously hollow that it was bound to collapse shortly. "Can such a state of affairs last long?" he asked rhetorically, and answered, "There is no chance of that...the immediate future of England will be democracy."²⁶ Actually, he went further even than this. The coming regime in England would be a social democracy, i.e., one which would bring in far-reaching social reforms in areas such as working conditions, sanitation, housing, and poor relief. Moreover, this social democracy would itself be only a transitional stage to socialism, because it would become apparent that the social ills of industrial Britain could be alleviated but not cured under a capitalist economic system. So once the political transformation was complete it would be succeeded by a social revolution which would usher in a new, humane, rational, and non-alienated world.

26. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 333; MECW, 3, pp. 512-513.

Convinced that the collapse of the Christian/capitalist world order was "no longer far away", he tried to outline some of the features of the social system which would replace it. The socialist society of the near future would be democratic (based on universal suffrage and representative government), secular (religion was an irrational superstition which would gradually die out), co-operative (the capitalist mode of production and distribution would be replaced by some form of communal organisation -- Engels gave no details), and decentralised (the centralised administration of the state would be abolished). He stressed the disappearance of the state several times in the Vorwärts! articles. It was no use pretending that once full democracy was reached the state would cease to be hateful and oppressive, he argued, because history showed that democracy could be the most dreadful form of dictatorship. The fact was, he concluded, that the state itself was inhumane and the cause of most stains on the democratic principle. In a genuine democracy, therefore, such an instrument of coercion, inequality and injustice would have to be eliminated. The demise of the Christian/capitalist state would therefore eventually mean "the demise of the state as such".²⁷

Engels' Vorwärts! articles thus revealed that their author was a committed socialist convinced of the need for a

27. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 313; MECW, 3, p. 492. Also "Die Lage Englands: I. Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert", loc. cit., MEGA I, 4, p. 298; MECW, 3, p. 476.

thorough-going transformation of social and economic relationships. But they also showed that he expected this change to come gradually, and to be presaged by the achievement of political democracy. He was a revolutionary-reformist, in the sense that his ultimate goals were revolutionary but his strategy was reformist. In England, at least, Engels thought the odds were that socialism would be established relatively peacefully and 'legally' in three stages: (i) suffrage reform, (ii) social reform legislation, (iii) the legislative abolition of private ownership of capital and property. He did not envisage a military insurrection as either necessary or likely -- so in one sense of the word he was no longer a 'revolutionary'. And, while he was still fascinated by politics and a staunch republican democrat, he had come to sympathise with Owenite and Fourierist conviction that political affairs and the activities of central governments were ultimately irrelevant, even inimical, to the establishment of genuine socialist communities. The changes he desired most of all were social and economic; politics were no more than short-term means of creating a non-political society, and though the parliamentary state was the ladder to be used in the climb it would have to be kicked away as soon as the higher stage had been reached. Engels, in short, was a non-violent, reformist, anarchist.

Flattered by Marx's admiration for his "Condition of England" articles, he explained that they were first drafts of chapters for his projected book on the situation of the

English working-class. He showed Marx his research materials and outlined his ideas for additional sections dealing with, among other things, the physical state of the urban poor, the psychological condition of wage-labourers, the attitudes of bourgeoisie and workers to each other, the question of real wages, and the trade-union movement. Some of these issues -- for example that of wages and the psychological effects of factory work -- were ones that Marx had been thrashing out for himself in the Paris Manuscripts when Engels' arrival interrupted his writing; about others he knew little but was eager to learn, e.g., trade-unionism; others again he knew something of from his reading of Buret, but Engels could give him more detailed information, as in the case of working-class health and housing. Drawing on the Vorwärts! articles and on The Condition of the English Working Class which its author began later that month, we can reconstruct something of what Engels probably told Marx in the long conversations they had about England in the first days of September 1844.

To start with, he impressed on Marx certain general conclusions he had come to concerning English society. In his view, England was a country suffering from a social disease, a disease which, like a physical illness, seemed to be developing according to internal laws and which exhibited recurrent crisis periods. It was now heading towards a "last and most violent crisis which would determine the

fate of the patient".²⁸ The cause of the sickness, he explained, was the mechanisation of industry within a *laissez-faire* economy; the worst symptoms were mass destitution and social warfare. In the huge urban centres of Britain a society of a new kind was emerging, one in which the majority of the population was dependent on factory work for livelihood, in which untold wealth existed side by side with mass pauperism and unemployment, in which fear and distrust separated rich from poor, and in which daily work had become humiliation and torture. In order to sense the quality of life in this industrial 'civilisation' one had only to wander the streets of London or a northern factory town. Urbanisation had exacerbated the antagonistic social relations characteristic of capitalist society, and a mood of reckless despair and sullen class-hatred now pervaded the industrial slums. He was more than ever convinced that exploitation of the propertyless and fragmentation of the human community were brewing a social war.²⁹ In any conflict between the working class and the factory owners, Engels commented, the latter possessed a formidable weapon: capital, which he defined as "the direct or indirect control of the means of subsistence and production". Against this extremely powerful instrument, the poor had only the feeble weapons of association and strike action, neither of which were effective when

28. Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England, MEGA I, 4, p. 121; MECW, 4, p. 419.

29. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p.30: MECW, 4, p. 329.

unemployment was high. The result was an unequal contest, the victims of which were the wage-labourers, who were always at the mercy of the vicissitudes of the economy. In the face of total indifference by the rest of English society to their plight, he claimed, many paupers in the great cities succumbed either to starvation or, more often, to fatal illness brought on by undernourishment. For this horrifying fact, he charged bluntly, the propertied classes, and particularly the middle-class entrepreneurs who ran the factory system, were to blame. They were guilty of no less than "social murder".³⁰

He was to use the phrase "social murder" to characterise the conduct of the bourgeoisie on several occasions in The Condition of the English Working Class. He did not originate it -- he had picked it up from The Northern Star. But its intransigence expressed the strength of his feelings about the apparent indifference of the vast majority of the middle and upper classes to mass poverty and to the inhumane living and working conditions suffered by the urban workforce. The bourgeoisie, he charged, forced thousands of proletarians to live in a manner which led inevitably to premature death, and it was fully conscious both of the conditions and their likely consequences. He candidly revealed to Marx the primary purpose of his book: to serve as the case for the prosecution against the English ruling classes. It would

30. Ibid, MEGA 1, 4, p. 31; MECW, 4, p. 33ⁿ.

demonstrate that they could plead neither ignorance nor powerlessness in the face of mass destitution. As he put it, the offence was more of omission than commission, but it remained murder.³¹ He was, in his own words, still "filled with wrath and resentment" against the businessmen he had met in Lancashire, and against the politicians who looked after their interests in parliament and the journalists who formed 'public opinion'. Lumping together the aristocracy with other property-owners and calling them all the 'bourgeoisie', he commented that he had never seen such a class "so deeply demoralised, so incurably debased by selfishness, so corroded within (and) so incapable of progress". What was so striking about England was the single-minded preoccupation of its propertied classes with monetary gain; the sad truth was that while there were many decent and virtuous individuals in English 'society', the civilisation as a whole was rotten.³²

In Engels' view, then, the avarice and callousness of the bourgeoisie had created in Britain a social catastrophe of immense dimensions. He believed that as entrepreneurs installed more machines, unemployment would rise and the problem would become mammoth. Soon, he predicted, millions would be destitute, but neither middle-class 'opinion' nor the government had any solution to what was to become of them. They could not be sent back to the countryside, because the

31. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 95; MECW, 4, p. 394.

32. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, n. 261; MECW, 4, p. 562-563.

rural areas were already relatively over-populated vis-à-vis the good agricultural land and farm-jobs available. He was in any case contemptuous of rural life, and believed that the farm-labourer's lot was every bit as subhuman as the urban worker's, perhaps even worse because of the intellectual poverty of the villanes. Nor would a return to the land produce social peace; he claimed there was already a social war in the countryside which would only be sharpened by the arrival of class-conscious migrants from the towns. The only answer, he insisted, was to place the management of the new industrial technology on a different footing, so that it could be used to raise the general prosperity of the nation rather than, as at present, lining the pockets of the rich.³³

Engels was convinced that, short of this radical solution, there was no long-run cure for increasing misery among the lower classes, both urban and rural. Yet, he acknowledged, even the thunder-cloud of poverty had a silver lining -- the nascent socialist movement in England and France was an indirect product of working-class misery, and class consciousness was growing in the slums of northern England as in the workshops of Paris and Lyon. France was catching the social sickness afflicting Britain, he suggested to Marx, and once the diagnosis was firm the only rational thing to do was to "rejoice over everything which accelerates the course of the disease". One could only hope that, from the paroxysms of

33. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 24 & 253; MECW, 4, pp. 322 & 555-556.

the last crisis, a rejuvenated society would be born.³⁴

"Social disease", "social warfare", "social murder": this was extreme language. Marx probably asked him how he would reply to critics who claimed that his diagnosis, though in some respects accurate, was alarmist. Engels likely replied by examining more closely four aspects of the English case: the relationship between classes, the living standards and mentality of the urban work-force, the nature of working-class protest, and the unstable state of the economy.

The English middle-class, he reiterated, was selfish and hypocritical. While it made a great parade of philanthropy and paternalism, it was reluctant to concede the shorter working-hours and better wages it could manifestly afford given Britain's quasi-monopoly of world markets. Socially, the average bourgeois aspired to marry into the upper classes and buy a country estate, and he regarded the lower classes with contempt mingled with fear. Economically, entrepreneurs usually took a narrow, short-term view of their own interests, and were determined to exploit their workers to the full in order to cut costs. Hence there was no sense of mutual toleration and partnership between employers and employees; indeed many workers felt a deep hatred for their bosses, and most members of the middle class treated the urban poor as pariahs. The workers, Engels remarked, were

34. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 121; MECW, 4, p. 419.

a "race wholly apart", speaking in dialect, and having different customs, thoughts, values, religion, and politics from those of the bourgeoisie. There were in fact two nations in England, and the crevasse between them was widening as a proletarian sub-culture developed in the industrial cities.³⁵

Urbanisation and mechanisation together, he contended, were creating a new class-consciousness among urban workers. Crowded together in slums and subject to the same factory discipline, the workers were beginning to "feel as a class, as a whole", and to sense that if they formed a united front against their employers they might wield some economic power. Factory work underlined their separation from the bourgeoisie and awakened a new "consciousness of oppression", which was why the great cities were

the birthplaces of labour movements; in them the workers first began to reflect upon their own condition and to struggle against it; in them the opposition between proletariat and bourgeoisie first made itself manifest; from them proceeded the Trades Unions, Chartism and Socialism.³⁶

He therefore believed that there was a new spirit of rebellion abroad amongst the English lower classes, and he explained to Marx that working-class protest against the established order had been manifested in a crime, Luddism, secret societies, spontaneous strikes, Chartism, Owenism, the co-operative movement and trade-unionism. Working-class crime had been the earliest, crudest and least fruitful form of rebellion --

35. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 122; MECW, 4, pp. 419-420.

36. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 120; MECW, 4, p. 418.

a kind of desperate, individual protest which brought down on the criminal "the whole might of society", and which the workers soon abandoned for machine-wrecking, the first manifestation of class opposition to the bourgeoisie. This too had been dangerous and ineffective because directed against "one feature only of our present social arrangements" which it was futile to oppose in isolation. Even before the repeal of the old laws against 'combination' in 1824, some workers had looked to trade associations as a better means of fighting the employers, and such clandestine unions had organised some strikes, for example in the Scottish weaving industry in 1812 and again in 1822. But secrecy and government repression had crippled the growth of the trade-union movement before 1824. As soon as they were legalised, however, unions had been formed in almost all branches of industry, occasionally -- as in the case of the miners' federation -- achieving a nation-wide organisation. According to Engels, their prime objects were to negotiate fixed wage-scales, control the number of apprentices, assist unemployed and sick members, and obtain for the workers a share of the profits to be made from expanding foreign markets and the mechanisation of production.³⁷

His attitude to the British unions was ambivalent. He supported them enthusiastically, even passionately. He claimed that they had "spread over all England and attained

37. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 283-288; MECW, 4, pp. 502-507.

great power", but he also admitted pessimistically that their history was a long series of defeats. The few victories, he thought, were achieved when the unions were able to take advantage of an excess of demand over supply in the labour market, whereas defeats had occurred when the workers had vainly tried to resist wage-cuts forced upon them by employers faced with a slump in sales or still competition from rivals. Why did workers so often strike in adverse circumstances? Out of desperation, answered Engels, but also from a sense of human dignity. Faced with the diktat of a wage-cut, they employed the strike as a protest against inhumane social conditions; the strike was thus a symbolic gesture of denial that the bourgeoisie had any right to exploit them in good times and leave them to starve in bad. The strikers, he added, felt bound to proclaim that the economic 'necessities' pleaded by the employers were no such thing, and this was why the recent strike-wave in England was so significant -- it represented a wholesale repudiation by the working-class of its inhuman mode of life.³⁸

In practical terms, he believed, the growth of the English trade-union movement had had the effect of "holding the money-greed of the bourgeoisie within certain limits", and keeping alive a spirit of working-class rebellion against bourgeois omnipotence. It had also demonstrated to the workers that something more than unions and strikes were needed

38. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 207-208; MECW, 4, p. 506.

to break the power of the ruling class. For Engels, trade-unionism was thus immensely valuable but nonetheless severely limited in what it could do. Still, he argued, the importance of the British labour movement was not restricted to its bargaining power. The unions' real significance was that they were the workers' first attempt to interfere with laissez-faire capitalism by restricting competition. The essence of trade-unionism was therefore a refusal by men to be treated as commodities, and by taking this stand the working-class was in fact repudiating the existing economic system and its laws lock, stock and barrel. Hence the unions were potentially a threat to "the vital nerve of the present social order."³⁹ When he interpreted the union movement for Marx in this way, Engels was still caught up emotionally in the 1844 national miners' strike. He was to describe this in detail in The Condition of the English Working Class, stressing the bravery, determination and patience of the miners and their families. In length and scope this strike was exceptional, but Engels believed that the miners had only exhibited in heightened form the qualities of the average union-member. The labour movement, he affirmed was an excellent school of character, because unionists developed firmness and self-reliance which would stand them in good stead in the battles to come. "People who endure so much to bend one

39. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 208; MECU, 4, n. 507.

single bourgeois", he commented, "will be able to break the power of the whole bourgeoisie".⁴⁰

Trade-unionism also provided the militant workers with tactical experience in the industrial war. Strikes, maintained Engels, were sometimes skirmishes, sometimes "weighty struggles", but whether large or small these economic battles functioned as a "military school" in which the workers learned to organise their forces, deploy their limited weapons to best advantage, and counter their enemies' blows. To French socialists' assertions that the English workers were cowardly because they rarely rioted or fought government troops on the barricades, he replied that lengthy strikes required just as much courage as that shown by the Lyon silk-workers in 1834, and, moreover, were potentially more effective since they fought "social evils" with social rather than political weapons.⁴¹ Thus Engels, who before visiting Britain had championed violent insurrection against the crowned heads of Europe, was now less sympathetic to the French revolutionary tradition, and had been won over to the dual strategy of the English labour movement: peaceful political agitation for electoral reform combined with equally non-violent strike action for a better economic deal. Like some Chartist and Owenite leaders, he believed that these reforms were feasible short-term goals, and that they would lead irrevocably to a

40. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 214; MECW, 4, p. 513.

41. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 214; MECW, 4, pp. 512-513.

transformation of political, economic and social life in the long run.

Unlike the more moderate Chartists and labour leaders, however, Engels was not a 'pure' reformist refusing to look beyond gradual, short-term improvements. Not only was he convinced that factory Acts and universal suffrage would not, by themselves, solve the 'social problem', he had a firm belief that collective bargaining could not substantially ameliorate the living standard of the urban poor. The sad fact was that the unions' efforts were powerless against the economic law governing wage-rates: the balance of supply and demand in the labour market. This meant that during slumps the unions had perforce to acquiesce in wage-cuts or risk being smashed in a fight against overwhelming odds, while in times of expansion they could do no more than make certain their members cashed in on the employers' competition for labour. In general, then, the unions had little effect on the overall trend of real wages, which was determined by powerful economic forces beyond their control.⁴²

Nonetheless, Engels did not regard the unions as totally ineffective. There were three ways, he suggested, where they could -- and frequently did -- make a tangible difference to real incomes. On the local level, dealing with single employers, they were often strong enough to force con-

42. *Ibid.*, MEGA 1, 4, pp. 76-81, 134-136 & 205-208; MECW, 4, pp. 376-80, 431-433 & 504-507.

formity with the wage-rates and working conditions standard elsewhere in the country. As a result wages tended to be set by the most efficient and prosperous firms, thus minimising the 'sweating' of workers by entrepreneurs trying to compensate for their antiquated machinery with long working hours and rock-bottom wages. Secondly, the threat of strike action was usually sufficient to prevent employers cutting wages below those paid by their competitors because they would probably lose more from a strike than they would gain by the wage-cut; hence unions were fairly good defence organisations against the tendency of wages to fall back to subsistence level. And in the third place, they helped workers make up rapidly the ground lost during trade-crises, thus mitigating the distress caused by periodic lay-offs and wage-cuts. On the other hand, it would be a mistake to over-estimate their influence. Useful in the short run and at the local level, they were powerless to resist the "more considerable forces" which determined the state of the labour market, namely trade-crises, mechanisation, and over-population. When the labour-supply situation was adverse, the strike was an innocuous weapon. Nor could it be used to eradicate any of the worst and most fundamental evils of industrial capitalism: exploited wage-labour, unemployment, speculation, and recurrent recessions.⁴³

Engels thus believed that trade-union pressure was

43. Ibid.

a factor in determining the movement of real wages, but only a minor one. Basically unions slowed down the fall of wage-rates in periods of stagnation, and accelerated their recovery after severe slumps. Possibly too they helped establish a minimum wage slightly above a starvation level. But that was all. To explain the long-term movements of real wages one had to look elsewhere. As we have seen, the problem of wages was one that fascinated Marx in the summer of 1844. He and Engels no doubt argued it out during Engels' stay in Paris. We have already seen what Marx's opinions were by examining his scattered remarks in the Paris Manuscripts. From The Condition of the English Working Class we can deduce what Engels' experience of industrial England and his study of political economy taught him about the topic. In fact, the two **most** important sources of his ideas seem to have been Smith's The Wealth of Nations and some data which he had assembled on the effect of machinism on wages in the Lancashire **cotton** industry.

Engels accepted Smith's argument that labour was a commodity, and that the interplay of supply and demand regulated its price.⁴⁴ He also agreed with Malthus' focus on population trends as a major long-term determinant of wage-levels. Given the rapidly expanding working population, he suggested, the normal pattern was the growth of an 'industrial reserve army' of unemployed, and therefore a **constant**

44. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 81; MECW, 4, p. 379.

downward pressure on wages. Employed workers were forced to fight continual defensive battles to maintain the status-quo, and if left to the free play of market forces, wages would 'naturally' decline to subsistence level.⁴⁵ However, under industrial capitalism another major factor had to be taken into consideration: the impact of mechanisation. The bourgeoisie, he noted, usually maintained that machinism reversed the situation in the labour market, using the argument that improvements in machinery, by lowering costs, reduced prices, which in turn increased consumption and expanded production, so that demand for labour soon exceeded the supply, allowing the worker to bargain successfully for a raise.⁴⁶ But did mechanisation really raise wages? On the basis of his knowledge of the cotton industry Engels concluded that it did not.

There were two flaws in the standard liberal argument, he asserted. For one thing, the change-over to factory production in an industry did not automatically create a rapid demand for more adult male employees. Not only was there a substantial time-lag before the size of the factory work-force caught up with the number of handicraftsmen previously employed, the nature of factory-work was different, a matter of mere machine-supervision which could be done -- and frequently was -- by women and children at much lower wages.

45. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 80-88; MECW, 4, pp. 379-386.

46. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 134-136; MECW, 4, pp. 431-433.

In consequence, even if the total work-force expanded, grown men were "more and more supplanted and not re-employed by the increase in manufacture". Mechanism therefore created a 'surplus' of unemployed adult males with unwanted traditional skills.⁴⁷

Moreover, he claimed, the bourgeoisie's assertion that mechanisation had raised wages was simply not true. It was admitted by both employers and employees in the textile industry that the price of piece-work had been reduced; the only dispute was whether this had also reduced weekly wages, as the operatives claimed. He admitted it was not easy to get to the bottom of the matter because wage-rates varied considerably in different branches of the industry, but on balance that there was little doubt that weekly wages had "in many branches of work been reduced by the improvement of machinery". This was the case, for example, in coarse mule spinning, where spinners who in the late 1830s earned 30 shillings per week were now making between 12½ and 16½.⁴⁸

Engels' conclusions concerning the trend of real wages in the textile industry were as follows: (i) piece-work rates had fallen generally, and weekly rates had also fallen in some branches; (ii) where workers had maintained their living standards they had to work faster or longer to do so; (iii) the increasing percentage of women and children

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

hired meant a decline in the average wage in the industry; and (iv) even in branches of the industry, like fine spinning, where weekly wages had kept up, the workers had failed to share in the extra profits derived from technical advances. He was inclined to argue an 'absolute impoverishment' thesis for real wages in the Lancashire textile industry, but realising that his evidence supported this only in part, he added a 'relative impoverishment' rider to his discussion.⁴⁹

His data on wages in the cotton industry, while it failed to prove conclusively that real wages had fallen, did apparently indicate that they had not risen. How did he obtain it? In part it was based on his own observations and inquiries in the Manchester area, in part on standard works on the British textile industry by Ure and Baines, but mainly on a book by his Chartist acquaintance James Leach, entitled Stubborn Facts from the Factories by a Manchester Operative (London, Ollivier, 1844).⁵⁰ Leach was clearly out to make a case, but there seems no reason to believe that he 'doctored' his evidence, and Engels' personal judgment was that he was thoroughly honest and reliable. What neither Leach nor Engels appear to have taken sufficiently into their calculations was the fact that mechanisation, while it undoubtedly drastic-

49. Ibid.

50. James Leach, Stubborn Facts from the Factories, by a Manchester Operative, London, Ollivier, 1844; Sir Edward Baines, History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain, London, Fisher, Fisher & Jackson, 1835; Andrew Ure, The Cotton Manufacture of Great Britain, systematically investigated, 2 vols, London, Knight, 1836.

ally lowered the living standards of handicraft workers who failed to adapt to factory work, also created new types of skilled labour (especially in machine-maintenance), and that the relatively high wages paid to these workers may have raised average wages in industry as a whole. To be sure, Engels did recognise the complexity of the question, but in his eagerness to come up with an answer he disregarded the incompleteness (and, for that matter, the partisan source) of his information.

Generalising beyond Lancashire textiles, he tried to provide an analysis of the determinants of minimum, maximum, and average wages in an industrial economy. Minimum wages, he stated, were determined by what the workers themselves regarded as the amount needed to survive. Thus a subjective factor always entered into what was judged to be 'subsistence-level'; while no worker would work for less than the sum needed to avoid starvation, different work-forces needed different sums -- manual labourers requiring more than machine-minders, and the English requiring more than the Irish. For example, since the textile industry desired a stable, reliable, adequately nourished work-force, it was necessary for mill-owners to pay wages high enough for the male operatives to keep their families fed, clothed, and housed. The average minimum wage assumed that most members of the operative's family worked, thus ensuring that women and children were available as 'hands'. Usually wages were such that a fully employed family would "get on pretty well"

whereas one with fewer working members than average would do "pretty badly". But in general the 'minimum wage' level would be a notch or two above destitution, although in periods of severe economic dislocation it would sink to the absolute minimum required to survive physically on a potato diet. Engels was thus rather ambivalent on the question of minimum wages, wavering between cultural and physiological criteria for 'subsistence'. He apparently opted for the former except in exceptional circumstances, but was vague over when circumstances would become exceptional.⁵¹

Maximum wages, he suggested, were determined by competition between entrepreneurs for the available labour. Capitalists were prepared to pay higher wages only when they foresaw higher profits as a result of so doing, i.e., when demand for their commodities exceeded supply and prices were rising. The ultimate, if indirect, determinant of maximum wages was thus the purchasing power of domestic consumers and the availability of foreign markets. The upper limit to rising wages was only the practical one, that under capitalism periods of boom always led, sooner or later, to slumps in which demand for labour slackened markedly. So if real wages sometimes reached extraordinary peaks, they always quickly fell off again when temporary phases of rapid economic growth levelled off. Engels thus concluded that while in theory the

51. Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse, MEGA I, 4, pp. 78-79; MECU, 4, pp. 376-377.

sky was the limit as far as maximum wages were concerned, in reality all sharp and substantial rises were temporary gains which the workers were unable to preserve in a less favourable economic climate.⁵²

He argued that since wages reached bottom when there was a surplus of available workers and reached top when the labour supply was inadequate, the average or 'normal' rate of wages was that obtaining when supply and demand were balanced. He expected this to "stand a little above the minimum", although just how much above would normally depend on the workers -- their normal life-style and perceived needs. For example, if the workers were accustomed to eat meat several times a week, the capitalists would have to reconcile themselves to paying sufficient wages to permit this. In effect, he was suggesting that average wages would be the minimum plus a bit extra, the size of the addition being culturally determined. His theory of wages thus mixed economic and socio-cultural causes, since he claimed that economic factors were dominant except when supply and demand happened (rather fortuitously) to balance, at which point social traditions took over. He assumed that in theory there was no difficulty in establishing when supply and demand for labour were in equilibrium -- a questionable assumption -- but he admitted that there might be great difficulties in practice in specifying the average wage-rate of manufacturing industry

52. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 79-80; MECW, 4, p. 378.

as a whole because of the great diversity of trades. English industry was becoming extremely complicated, he recognised, and there was a wide variety of jobs requiring different skills and degrees of expertise. For each of these jobs, a worker required some level of intelligence, education or training, and also considerable self-discipline, so that the scale of pay had to be such as to induce him to take and keep it. Roughly speaking, then, wage-rates varied from job to job according to the skill and patience required. That was why the average wages of industrial workers were higher than those of porters, day-labourers and farm-workers. So, while it might be possible to establish an 'average wage' for each branch of industry, there was little point in trying to compute an average for all paid workers.⁵³

Engels' theory of wages was thus a rather inconclusive mixture of the theoretical and the empirical. He believed -- in theory -- that there were economic laws determining long-term movements of real wages, but he also had a strong sense of the non-economic factors involved in the short run. Just how much weight he gave to cultural influences is difficult to say, but prima facie he saw traditional expectations as the factor which kept wages from plummeting to rock-bottom (physical subsistence) level. He also, it will be remembered, thought that trade-unions played a significant

53. Ibid, MEGA 1, 4, pp. 80-81; MECU, 4, pp. 378-379.

role in keeping wages up, except when an over-abundant labour-supply rendered them powerless. He was wavering between an a-priori, deductive theory of wages in the tradition of Smith, and an empirical account stressing psychological and historical factors. He tried to combine the two, with mediocre results.

Engels' ideas on real wages were no less tentative than Marx's, and neither budding economist felt he had yet reached the bottom of the problem. They agreed that they would both investigate it further and meet again to compare notes. In any case, Engels suggested, the wages question was far from the be-all and end-all of the wider issue of working-class living standards. Low wages were just one aspect of a much broader problem. To really comprehend the life-style of the average industrial worker one had to take into account long working-hours, dangerous working conditions, slum housing, atmospheric pollution, poor quality clothing, and inadequate diet and medical care. He proceeded to inform Marx about housing conditions in the Lancashire factory towns, about industrial accidents and diseases, and about the prevalence of disease, drunkenness, crime, and immorality in the lower-class ghettos of the new industrial cities.

Marx already knew something about urban poverty in England from his reading of Buret. But in fact he had at this time only skimmed the long chunks of factual reportage in Buret's two-volume opus, so it was probably Engels who rubbed his nose in the nasty realities of industrial squalor.

If Engels' judgments echoed Buret's, they probably seemed to Marx the more conclusive when stated in person and backed up by the wealth of descriptive detail Engels had at his fingertips. Nonetheless, even now Marx failed to grasp the qualitative difference between Lancashire factory industry and the small, pre-industrial ateliers in which the Parisian ouvriers worked. Wage-labour, unemployment, poverty, and crowded insanitary housing looked appalling enough to him in Paris, and so he pictured the industrial towns of England as more of the same, only even worse. The two men were thus somewhat at cross-purposes in their discussions about English working-class life -- they were using the same terms to mean different things.

When Engels talked to Marx of the English working class or 'proletariat' (he tended to use the two terms indiscriminately), he was referring primarily to factory-hands. He sometimes included all urban wage-labourers, and occasionally mentioned the English "rural proletariat" of farm labourers, but he deliberately excluded handicraftsmen owning their own tools and working for themselves or for entrepreneurs on a contract basis. Artisans of this type he regarded as a hang-over from an older kind of economy, one which was essentially pre-industrial and which, in England at least, was disappearing rapidly as steam-power was applied to more branches of industry. He was aware that in some English manufacturing centres like Birmingham the old handicraft methods still predominated, and that this was even more the

case in France and Germany, but he was convinced that they were doomed. In any case, he argued, even where traditional trades had not yet succumbed to mechanisation, the craftsmen were increasingly becoming dependent on a few merchant capitalists who owned the raw materials and who controlled the wholesale distribution of finished goods. So handicrafts were being drawn into the economic system of industrial capitalism and artisans were joining the labour movement in ever increasing numbers. Engels thus recognised the difference between a factory-hand and a craftsman but was inclined to dismiss the latter as a relic of the past.⁵⁴ Marx as yet scarcely distinguished between the two at all: they were all ouvriers to him, and his mental picture of the 'proletariat' was based mainly on the Parisian artisans he had met.

We have seen that Engels was convinced that a strong class-consciousness was developing among militants in the English industrial centres, and gradually influencing more and more factory workers. He seems to have viewed this class-consciousness as composed of four main elements: (i) a commitment to radical democratic politics, which had found expression most recently in the Chartist movement; (ii) a determination to combat the bourgeoisie economically as well as politically by minimising the exploitation of wage-labour, which had given rise to the trade-unions; (iii) a desire to create a different kind of economic order based on co-operative

54. Ibid, MEGA 1, 4, pp. 26-28, 189-190, & 198; MECU, 4, pp. 324-326, 480-489 & 497-498.

production -- this, he thought, was the theoretical foundation of Owenism; and (iv) a repudiation of bourgeois values and culture, and an effort to create an independent proletarian culture drawing on a wide variety of European radical and socialist authors. With each of these aims Engels had great sympathy, and he discussed with Marx the chances of their being carried through in England in the near future.

Would there be a revolution in England, Marx inquired, and if so, what form would it take? The future was still in the balance, Engels replied; some fairly drastic changes were almost certain, but exactly what these would be would depend on several factors, in particular the evolution of the economy, the intransigence of the bourgeoisie, the success of the current campaigns for political reform and better factory legislation, and the development of English socialism. It was clear, he argued, that under the present economic system the social problem would never be completely solved because capitalism required a reserve army of labour to draw on in booms, and also tended to create greater unemployment as mechanisation went ahead. It was equally clear, he added, that the mass of workers felt insecure and exploited, and desired to partake of the fruits of technological progress from which they rightly considered they were at present being unjustly excluded. The trade-union movement was expanding, class-consciousness was growing, and socialism was making inroads among the more militant and self-educated workers. The mass working-class support for Chartism indicated that

many, perhaps most, workers believed in the possibility of making the British parliamentary system truly democratic, and that a continual pressure for universal suffrage would be kept up until it was granted. The campaign for factory legislation demonstrated that there was considerable support in the country for moderate social reform, and that the working-class militants were probably correct in believing they could persuade the state to control the worst abuses of industrialisation. The growth of English socialism, on the other hand, indicated that a small percentage at least of the English proletariat already recognised that neither political nor social reforms would be sufficient to create a really humanitarian and progressive society, and that a social revolution would be needed before exploitation and repression were fully abolished.⁵⁵

Marx likely probed further. How successful would the Chartists, factory reformers, and Owenites be in the next decade? Engels examined each in turn, and also the prospects of the English economy. Chartism, he explained, had started off as an alliance between bourgeois Radical democrats and working-class militants. It was premised on the feasibility of making the House of Commons a democratic instrument, and had initially been purely political in nature. It was 'revolutionary' in the sense that the Six Points of the Peoples' Charter, if enacted, would transform English

55. Ibid., MEGA 1, 4, pp. 164-168 & 216-228; MECW, 4, pp. 460-466 & 517-529.

political life, and produce a decisive shift in the locus of power. It was not, however, initially socialist, although a quasi-socialist aura had gradually emerged in the north since 1838, and now that the Radicals had defected to the liberal bourgeoisie, the movement had become an almost purely working-class affair. Indeed, he affirmed, Chartism from 1843 could legitimately be called a "class movement" with an "essentially social nature" going beyond political democracy. Chartist leaders had now taken up "the knife and fork question", and the current Chartist slogan was "Political power our means, social happiness our end". Still, the socialism of men like O'Connor was as yet very primitive, even reactionary, and their chief remedy for poverty had hitherto consisted in recommending a land-allotment system -- a utopian, agrarian vision rendered obsolete by the growth of mechanised industry. So as a brand of socialism Chartism was hardly a rival to Owenism. Nevertheless it was important because it possessed mass working-class support, because it had a national organisation, because it was going to succeed, and because its militants would learn a lot from waging their campaign. He expected the Chartists to quickly recognise the limits of their current tactics, and to transform their movement in the next few years into a fully fledged socialist party.⁵⁶

Engels had a good knowledge of the history of English

56. *Ibid*, MEGA I, 4, pp. 216-224 (quotation, p. 224);
 MECW, 4, pp. 517-525 (quotation, pp. 524-525).

factory legislation. He could tell Marx about the pioneering efforts of Robert Owen in the decade after 1815, about the inadequacies of early laws which lacked enforcement mechanisms, and about the 10-hour day campaign mounted by the trade-unions in the early 1830s. He recognised the different biases in the Parliamentary Commission Reports of 1832 and 1833 on the factory system (the first, headed by the Tory philanthropist Sadler was a 'party' attack on the liberal manufacturers; the second, produced under a Liberal government, was a partial whitewash job), and the virtues and limits of the 1833 Factory Act. The Act, he maintained, did succeed in getting rid of some of the very worst abuses by limiting child-labour, but many evils like dangerous and unhealthy working conditions remained untouched.⁵⁷ He also described to Marx the achievements of the reform movement in the late 1830s and early 1840s, mentioning the role played in the Commons by Tory philanthropists like Lord Ashley and Richard Dastler, and the resumption of the trade-unions' agitation for a 10-hour day. The fruit of this campaign was the 1844 Factory Bill, which would effectively reduce working-hours to ten for women and youths. He was confident that it would soon pass into law (in fact it did, but not till 1847), and concluded triumphantly: "What the working-men will do they can do, and that they will have this Bill they proved just

57. *Ibid*, HCGA I, 4, pp. 161-162 (quotation, p. 161); HCGA, 4, pp. 160-165 (quotation, p. 162).

Spring". The manufacturers, he noted, had opposed the legislation vehemently, claiming that it would ruin British industry. He admitted that there was some truth in their case since the Bill would give foreign manufacturers a competitive advantage, but considered this a myopic way of looking at the question. "Naturally", he remarked, "if the Ten Hours Bill were a final measure, it must ruin England; but since it must inevitably bring with it other measures which must draw England into a path wholly different from that hitherto followed, it can only prove an advance". In fact he saw the 10-Hours Act as a substantial gain because it was the thin end of the wedge: one reform would lead to another and 'laissez-faire' would be gradually abandoned. Moreover, the limits to this kind of legislation would become evident, and the labour movement would then demand much more than state control over working hours and conditions. The 1844 Bill, he supposed, would therefore be the first in a series of measures which would bring Britain to the brink of socialism. One path to a wholesale transformation of the English economy lay through parliament, and the task would no doubt be much easier once universal suffrage had been achieved.⁵⁸

There was no question, then, but that Engels' strategy was reformist, and that he looked to the House of Commons as the key to social and political progress. He was confident

58. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 160-169; MECW, 4, pp. 465-466.

that both the Chartists and the factory reformers would eventually be successful. How long they would take, however, would depend to a large degree on whether they could mobilise vociferous, mass support behind their campaigns. And this in turn would depend mainly on how discontented, angry, and enlightened as to the cause of their poverty, were the lower classes. When the economy was expanding and industry was prosperous, he assumed, manufacturers would be able to buy off worker protest with better wages despite the dislocation and uncertainty caused by continuing mechanisation. But the congenital instability of the capitalist economy meant that such bursts of prosperity were never maintained beyond a half-dozen years or so at a time. Commercial crises alternated with booms, crises meant widespread unemployment, and unemployment meant poverty and protest.

Engels, since studying Fourier and Proudhon in more depth, was reassessing his theory of periodic economic crises. He was now more inclined to give some credit to their under-consumptionist explanation. Mechanisation, he pointed out to Marx, was saving entrepreneurs considerable sums in wages, but by this very token the purchasing power of the proletariat as a whole was being reduced.⁵⁹ However, he admitted that this trend to reduced domestic consumption was counteracted "eventually" by increased consumption due to reduced prices

59. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 82-83; MECW, 4, p. 381.

made possible by higher productivity, and that, over all, industrialisation had not diminished the demand for labour. It was therefore fundamentally due to population expansion that the labour supply had outstripped demand, and he fell back again on his earlier explanation of slumps: the unplanned nature of capitalist production and distribution.⁶⁰

Drawing on his personal experience of textile manufacturing in Manchester and the export/import trade in Bremen, he explained how trade disturbances arose within the laissez-faire system. The manufacturers, he pointed out, could draw only uncertain inferences from the perpetual fluctuation of prices concerning the level of unsatisfied demand in the market. Business was done blindly, by guesswork, and when trading ceased most entrepreneurs were prone to expand production way beyond effective demand, thereby creating gluts. These sales-crises had been initially limited to one branch of manufacturing at a time, but the growing complexity of the economy and the "centralising tendency of competition" meant that minor, independent crises had been gradually "united into one periodically recurring crisis". He concluded that slumps were fundamentally over-production crises, and that the periodicity of the trade-cycle was five to six years.⁶¹ How and why did industry revive after a slump? Engels

60. *Ibid.*, MEWA I, 4, p. 83; MECW, 4, p. 381.

61. *Ibid.*, MEWA I, 4, pp. 84-85; MECW, 4, pp. 382-383.

attributed the renewal of economic activity to three main causes: the gradual liquidation of stocks, the decrease in manufacturing costs due to wage-cuts, and the stimulus given by speculators anticipating a rise in prices. The role played by speculation was an essential mechanism in the capitalist economy, he argued, because it was the speculators who, by forcing up prices, encouraged full-scale production by existing factories and the building of new ones. But, he added, it was also their precipitous activity that brought on the next crash.⁶²

So it went on in industrial England, Engels informed Marx, a perennial round of prosperity and crises. For the system to work, he pointed out, it was imperative that there be a pool of unemployed for most of the cycle. This 'reserve army', fully employed only in the most frantic boom months, swelled to immense proportions during recessions; yet even in years of moderate economic activity there existed in England a 'surplus population' which kept body and soul together by "begging, stealing, street-sweeping, collecting manure, pushing hand-carts, driving donkeys, peddling, or performing occasional small jobs". How big, on average, was this surplus population? asked Marx. One could not be certain, Engels replied, but in England and Wales alone one and a half million applied for poor-relief. In the depths of the depression of 1842 unemployment had reached astronomical proportions, with

62. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 94-95; MECU, 4, pp. 382-383.

the result that in northern industrial towns like Bolton and Stockport 20% of the population had applied for relief, while still more had simply abandoned the towns. Even among those with jobs, real wages had fallen drastically, and meat consumption had been reduced by between 20% and 60% depending on the locality. Depressions thus caused hardship for all workers, and were catastrophic for a sizeable percentage of the work-force.⁶³

What lessons for the future could be drawn from all this? Engels concluded that economic crises were obviously a permanent feature of industrial capitalism, and that all the evidence indicated that they were getting worse. Since the crisis of 1842 had provoked a "general insurrection in the manufacturing districts", it was reasonable to expect that future slumps would produce similar rebellions by the working-class. In any case, the system condemned a segment of the potential work-force to perpetual want, disease, and demoralisation, so there would be a continual groundswell of discontent. Technological advance was unstoppable, so mechanisation would continue, displacing handicrafts and thereby adding more workers to the 'surplus' population. In short, even if England maintained her rate of economic growth there would continue to exist great poverty and distress among the lower classes, and hence a vast potential of mass support

63. *Ibid*, MEGA I, 4, pp. 85-89; MECW, 4, pp. 383-388.

for trade-unionism, Chartism, factory reforms, and socialism.

But could England in fact continue as before? Could rapid, albeit spasmodic, expansion be maintained? Engels was doubtful. He sketched three alternative scenarios for the future of the British economy. One possibility, he suggested, was that British industry would fail to overcome increasing foreign competition, especially from America. American industrial potential was so great that she might, in the next twenty years, overtake Britain and establish a near-monopoly in the leading branches of manufacture. If this happened the majority of the English proletariat would be rendered superfluous, and they would have no choice but starvation or rebellion. In this eventuality, he implied, revolution would be the likely outcome.⁶⁴ On the other hand, he conceded, it was possible that England might retain her economic supremacy and her virtual monopoly of manufacturing. This would mean further economic growth and greater overall prosperity, but also ever more violent commercial crises. More industrialisation would mean more factory workers and the gradual creation of a two-class society. Eventually the proletariat would "embrace the whole nation, with the exception of a few millionaires", at which point (if not earlier) it would perceive the ease with which it could seize power. Continued growth and prosperity, then, would probably lead to a political 'revolution' (violent or legal) of the masses against

64. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 278-279; MECW, 4, pp. 579-580.

the capitalist élite.⁶⁵

These two scenarios -- great prosperity or severe hardship -- were extreme cases, the limits of the possible. Engels considered a third the most probable. He predicted that growth would continue but at a lessened rate, due to a greater foreign competition and the dislocation caused by ever severer slumps. Recurrent commercial crises and more difficult business conditions would progressively ruin the lower middle class, while the next major crisis (which he expected in 1847) would bring repeal of the Corn Laws and a parliamentary reform introducing universal suffrage. A further crisis -- perhaps in 1852-53 -- would probably instigate a social revolution along the lines of 1789 in France.⁶⁶

Engels thus expected that worsening economic crises would first aid the moderate political and social reform movements (Chartism, the trade-unions, and the factory reformers), but would eventually become so severe that a social transformation similar in scope to the French Revolution would ensue. Reforms, he asserted, would not stave off this transformation; they would, on the contrary, pave the way for more drastic changes. Would this social revolution be as bloody as that of 1789-95? Not necessarily, he replied, but that would depend on the intransigence of the bourgeoisie, and above all on the maturity of the revolutionary forces:

65. *Ibid*, MEGA I, 4, p. 279; MECU, 4, p. 580.

66. *Ibid*, MEGA I, 4, pp. 279-280; MECU, 4, pp. 580-581.

the industrial proletariat and their leaders. By 'maturity' Engels meant a highly developed intellectual life, a code of moral conduct of which he approved, and a grasp of political economy from a socialist perspective. To assess the English workers' maturity he thus had to analyse the quality and influence of English socialism.

He had, he told Marx, been very impressed with Owenism at first. Because he himself had been a manufacturer, Owen's socialism was considerate to the property-owners -- too considerate, Engels now believed -- but it recognised the class antagonism between proletariat and bourgeoisie, and demanded the abolition of capitalism and its replacement by a quasi-communal system of "home-colonies". Owenism, then, had the great merit of being founded on an analysis of capitalist economic exploitation of wage-labour, and Owen had correctly recognised the need to create a 'new moral world' based on a co-operative ethic and communal production. He had therefore personally made a considerable contribution to European socialist theory, and was well worth reading; he had also done some very valuable pioneering work in four areas: trade-unionism, co-operative societies, factory legislation, and the establishment of prototype socialist communities.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, since Owen's death the movement had stagnated, and with it most of English socialist theory, apart from the work of a handful of quasi-Owenite economists who had updated

67. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 163 & 224-227; MECW, 4, pp. 459 & 525-527.

socialist political economy by adopting some ideas of the Richardian school.

The 'orthodox' Owenites were, in the main, a disappointment to Engels. He disliked their pacifism, and what he regarded as their tolerance for the status-quo. The only method for establishing socialism of which they approved, he remarked, was that of winning over public opinion by peaceful propaganda, yet they were so dogmatic in their utterances that they were currently obtaining little success with this approach. In short, Owenism had become rigid, sterile, and stagnant. The Owenites seemed blind to the disintegration of the old social order which the events of the 1830s and early 1840s witnessed, and they failed to recognise the progress which was being made by the labour movement. He alleged that their ideology was thoroughly a-historical and utopian, commenting that they wished to "place the nation in a state of Communism at once, overnight, without pursuing the political struggle to the end". He disagreed with their hostility to working-class political action, and thought their contempt for Chartism was short-sighted, supercilious, and doctrinaire. He also considered that they had drawn the wrong conclusion from the work-force's hatred towards its employers. Refusing to accept that class-hatred played an important role in the growth of the labour movement, they resorted to preaching "a philanthropy and universal love" which was, so he claimed, "unfruitful for the present state of England". In a word, contemporary Owenism was "too abstract, too metaphysical, and

accomplished little". And, since it still dominated English socialism, socialism could never in its present form become the "common creed" of the English workers.⁶⁸

But if Owenism was merely a sect which, despite its theoretical value, appealed only to a few intellectuals, artisans and some proletarian militants, Chartism, though its social theory was much more primitive than that of Owen, was a mass movement with mainly working-class support.⁶⁹ To Engels the obvious solution was the union of Owenism and Chartism, which would be "the reproduction of French Communism in an English manner". He asserted that this fusion, which had already begun, would proceed hand-in-hand with the tremendous drive for self-education among the more militant trade-unionists and Chartists, and before long the English workers would outstrip the rest of the nation morally and intellectually.⁷⁰ Given his optimism about the rapid strides English socialism would soon be making, it seems reasonable to conclude that Engels expected that a blood-bath would probably be avoided in England.

He and Marx compared French and English socialisms. The English movement, Engels argued, had a "much more ample base" than the French because it had mass proletarian support.

68. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 223-227; MECW, 4, pp. 525-526.

69. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 226; MECW, 4, p. 526.

70. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 227-228; MECW, 4, pp. 527-528.

But in theoretical terms it was behind the French, and certainly had a lot to learn from writers like Fourier, the Saint-Simonians, and Proudhon.⁷¹ Marx was a little surprised at Engels' enthusiasm for Fourier; he himself had as yet read virtually nothing of Fourier's own work, and thought of him as an eccentric utopian from whose voluminous tomes *Considerant* had sifted the least perverse and most penetrating insights. Read Fourier yourself, urged Engels, and Marx agreed. He also resolved to study Owen, and the pamphlet literature by Owenites and neo-Ricardian socialists of which Engels had collected some samples. Engels probably lent Marx his copy of one of the best books in this genre, John Bray's Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy, which he had picked up in Leeds on one of his visits to the editorial office of The Northern Star.⁷² Bray and Fourier were to prove significant influences on Marx's intellectual development during the following winter.

English industrialisation and socialist theory were not the only topics of conversation between Marx and Engels during the latter's brief stay in Paris. They also discussed what had happened to Young Hegelianism. While Marx was living in Paris he continued to receive the publications of Young Hegelians like Bruno Bauer still residing in Germany.

71. Ibid., MEGA I, 4, p. 225; MECW, 4, p. 526.

72. John F. Bray, Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy, Leeds, D. Green, 1839 (reprinted, London, L.S.E., 1931).

These increasingly irritated him, especially when Bauer and his followers began dabbling in socialist theory and printing critical reviews of books like Proudhon's first mémoire on property, for which Marx had a great deal of respect. He considered that the Young Hegelians had stagnated intellectually, and Engels concurred. Bauer's recent work was flawed methodologically, the two men agreed, because he and his 'critical critics' (the label adopted by Bauer and his disciples) had failed to emancipate themselves from Hegel's idiosyncracies. It was also thin in content because, like his followers, he was usefully ignorant of French socialism and English political economy. Feuerbach alone, considered Marx and Engels, had recognised the need to discard speculative philosophy for empirical inquiry, but the rest of the Young Hegelian movement was still trapped in the nebulous verbosity of Idealist metaphysics. Unfortunately, progressive German public opinion was unaware of the backwardness of German social thought, and took the maunderings of Bauer and his disciples to be the latest revelations of the European intellectual avant-garde. It was time to disabuse it, suggested Marx, and to defend French socialism at the same time. Engels, who was an even stronger advocate of empiricism than Marx, agreed. So the two quickly decided to write a joint pamphlet satirising Bauer and his disciples, taking as the butt of their wit Bauer's new journal, the Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung. The general theme of the pamphlet was to be that in the Literatur-Zeitung Bauer's misguided

philosophical criticism of current affairs "and with it the nonsense of German speculation in general" had reached an absurd peak. As they were to explain in the preface, the authors were hoping to enlighten the "broad public" on the "illusions of speculative philosophy".⁷³ It was a kind of public manifesto that they, at least, had abandoned Idealist philosophy, Hegel, and Young Hegelianism for better things.

Planned as a brief, hard-hitting brochure entitled A Critique of Critical Criticism, the work turned into a rambling, book-length diatribe called The Holy Family (an allusion to the theological preoccupations of the Bauer brothers, against whom it was primarily directed). The culprit responsible for this change was Marx. He transformed the opus, and so ended up writing most of the final version. Two considerations led him to do so; one was the practical point that it was much easier to get a fat, scholarly-looking book past the Prussian censor than a polemical pamphlet; the other was that the manuscript expanded under his pen as he wrote, and he was loth to leave out his reflections on French socialism, French history, and the history of philosophy, once he had penned them. As a result, the published work was a mish-mash, intermingling flashes of insight on socialist theory with a great deal of tedious, heavy-handed mockery of

73. Friedrich Engels und Karl Marx, Die heilige Familie oder Kritik der kritischen Kritik, Frankfurt am M., Literarische Anstalt, J. Rütter, 1845; reprinted in MEGA I, 3, pp. 173-388; English translation, MECW, 4, pp. 4-209; quotation, MEGA I, 3, p. 179; MECW, 4, p. 7.

unmemorable articles by minor writers. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, it served to document some of Marx's opinions on French socialists, particularly Fourier (whom he had now begun to read), and Proudhon (whom he met soon after Engels left Paris), and it indicated the influence Engels had had on his views on methodology and epistemology.

Engels wrote his share -- a few brief sections -- before leaving France, so the book provides some further evidence on his views at the time. Underneath the surface satire and rhetoric in which his contributions were couched, he had four main things to say. The first was to point out that the Young Hegelians who had remained in Germany knew little and understood even less about English industrialisation, labour and politics. He briefly rammed home some facts about textile technology, wage-rates, industrial diseases, and the Anti-Corn Law League, about which the contributors to the Literatur-Zeitung appeared to be ignorant, and defended Chartism and Ashley's Ten-Hour Bill against their criticisms. The importance of the Ten-Hour Bill, he reiterated, was that although its specific provisions were mild, it embodied a "downright radical principle", one which would "lay the axe at the root of (English) foreign trade and therefore at the root of the factory system". It was also highly significant that the labour movement had conducted a massive propaganda campaign in favour of the Bill, holding "meeting after meeting" and drawing up "petition after petition". The British labour movement was evidently becoming

much more class-conscious, militant, and powerful.⁷⁴

Engels' second point was that the French workers needed labour organisations like the British, i.e., militant trade-unions co-ordinated on a national scale, ready to strike to enforce their wage demands and to conduct large-scale campaigns to educate public opinion and sway parliament. While in Paris he had picked up a copy of Flora Tristan's recently published Union ouvrière (Paris, 1843), liked the book, and been annoyed at Edgar Bauer's unsympathetic review in the Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung. Bauer notwithstanding, he argued, Tristan was right in claiming that "the worker makes everything, produces everything, and yet has no rights, no possessions, in short, nothing at all". There was a simple reason why the French worker received so little for his creative toil, he added; it was because in France, as in Germany, labour was poorly organised or not organised at all. Tristan had realised this, and her project for a French trade-union federation was eminently reasonable and practicable. Her book showed the French labour movement the way to move forward in the shoes of its British counterpart.⁷⁵

Thirdly, Engels praised both French and English communist critiques of the existing social order. At their best neither French nor English socialism was abstract or academic,

74. Engels, Die heilige Familie, MEGA I, 3, pp. 183-187; MECW, 4, pp. 12-16.

75. Flora Tristan, Union ouvrière, Paris, Prévot, 1843; Engels, Die heilige Familie, MEGA I, 3, pp. 188-189; MECW, 4, pp. 19-20.

he asserted, since they were both vitally linked to the labour movement. Because of this contact with working-class life, Anglo-French socialist thought was a "real human activity of individuals who are active members of society and who suffer, feel, think, and act as human beings". It was a practical critique of the existing economic system which diagnosed the causes of the decay of contemporary society and suggested equally "practical, concrete measures" for curing it. It was, in a word, realistic and not utopian.⁷⁶ Yet while he praised English and French socialism 'en bloc' in this fashion, Engels was well aware that there were several varieties of socialism current in France. In fact, he remarked, the French "have social theories, but not a social theory", and some sects were more progressive than others. There was a considerable difference, for example, between the "diluted Fourierism" preached by La Démocratie pacifique, which Engels interpreted as the social doctrine of a section of "the philanthropic bourgeoisie", and the communism of "the people". But the French workers were themselves split doctrinally, he conceded, and French socialism was still in a state of flux; in fact, the "true" French socialist movement was as yet only just beginning to emerge as a theoretical and practical force. In other words, Engels detected in France signs of the fusion between socialist ideology and working-class militancy which he had found in England. He was not

76. Engels, Die heilige Familie, MEGA I, 3, pp. 330-331; MECU, 7, pp. 152-153.

inclined to declare himself a disciple of any one French socialist theorist, but he had high hopes that from the interaction between a growing labour movement and the existing socialist groups there would emerge a mass working-class organisation committed to socialism.⁷⁷

Finally, he had a few remarks to make about Hegel, Young Hegelianism, Feuerbach, and philosophical historiography. The basic problem with Bauer and his disciples, he argued, was that they had not seen through Hegel. Their intellectual method (so-called 'critical criticism') was to try to prove "by means of Hegel's logic why everything had to happen as it did, and why no god could have prevented it". This led them into an unjustifiable historical inevitabilism according to which History was viewed as "a person apart, using man as a means to achieve its own aims". In reality, Engels emphasised, History itself 'did' nothing: it "aged no battles", had no aims, and was nothing but the activity of "real, living men" pursuing their own goals. Hegel had committed the cardinal error of transposing his own philosophical and historical categories into the motor forces of historical change. This methodological sleight of hand allowed him to construct an entire philosophico-historical system, a system by a "dialectic of concepts", a "war of the gods...known to philosophers alone". Feuerbach's great merit was that he had exposed this imaginary construction for the

77. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, no. 124-27; 1280, 4, 3. 123.

"old lumber" that it was. He had demonstrated that man alone was the creator of all human knowledge and human society, and thereby had done away entirely with the outmoded, mystifying, philosophical method of German Idealism. The time had come, Engels urged Bauer and his friends, to abandon speculative philosophy and to study French and English socialism which, for all its imperfections, had the striking merit of being empirical. From now on, he proclaimed, all social thought had to be grounded in the contemporary fact of industrialisation and in the practice of the labour movement.⁷⁸

When he had committed these polemical thoughts to paper, Engels entrusted them to Marx, and departed for Barmen, where he intended to wrestle with the problem of his projected career in textile manufacturing -- a prospect which he viewed with distaste -- and to write The Condition of the English Working Class. Marx remained in Paris, looking for further journalistic openings, and in the meantime learning more about French socialism and political economy. He had just met for the first time Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and was looking forward to further discussions with the man he regarded as the leading contemporary French socialist theorist.

78. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 188 & 265; MECW, 4, pp. 18 & 93.

CHAPTER 9

PROUDHON, MATERIALISM, AND ECONOMICS, 1844-45

A few days before Engels left Paris, Marx met Proudhon, most likely for the first time. The two men rapidly became quite close friends. Marx, who still rated Qu'est-ce que la propriété? very highly, was eager to hear Proudhon's newer ideas, and quickly perceived that Proudhon's mind had been evolving on lines similar to his own. Dissatisfied with his attempt to construct a grandiose philosophical system in De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité, the Frenchman had decided that a new kind of normative social science was required, and that the road to this lay through economics. He was thus struggling to work out a socialist political economy opposed to that of the dominant liberal school. Hence his current intellectual project, which was eventually to bear fruit in the Système des contradictions économiques, was virtually identical to the idea behind Marx's unfinished manuscript, and the young German saw in him another intellectual fellow-traveller who, unlike Pécqueur, had recognised the need to strip away all vestiges of Christian doctrine from the new social science. Proudhon found in Marx a budding economist who accepted his critique of private property and who was anxious to explore the intellectual ramifications of accepting the insights and concepts of post-Smithian economics.

while rejecting its value-assumptions. He also discovered an ex-philosopher who could explain and criticise the Hegelian system; Proudhon was at this time fascinated by Hegel, but hampered by lack of German in his efforts to learn about Idealist philosophy. As a result of these mutual interests, Marx and Proudhon spent many an hour together arguing about economics and philosophy. Decades later Engels reminisced that the two stayed up all night discussing political economy, and Marx subsequently claimed to have initiated Proudhon into the mysteries of Hegelianism.¹

Marx was expanding The Holy Family into a book during these months, and so Proudhon had a substantial influence on it. The text of the work demonstrates that Marx had great admiration for the French socialist. Here, he thought, was the one French theorist who was himself a worker, who had discarded religion, who was thoroughly hostile to the bourgeois state, and who had pointed out that any economy founded on private property was necessarily exploitative. He exulted that "not only does Proudhon write in the interests of the proletarians, he is himself a proletarian, an ouvrier. His work is a scientific manifesto of the French proletariat..."²

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1. Friedrich Engels, "Vorwärts zur ersten deutschen Ausgabe Das Elend der Philosophie", WERKE, 4, p. 558. Karl Marx, "Über P.-J. Proudhon", letter to J.B. Schweitzer, 24/1/65, WERKE, 16, p. 26; MESU, 2, p. 26.
 2. Karl Marx, Die heilige Familie oder Kritik der kritischen Kritik, Frankfurt am Main, Literarische Anstalt, 1845; reprinted in MEGA I, 3, pp. 173-388 (quotation, p. 211); MECW, 4, pp. 2-211 (quotation, p. 41).

While this remark indicates the extent of Marx's enthusiasm for Proudhon's first mémoire, it also suggests that, like Proudhon, he envisaged socialism as the ideology of handicraftsmen just as much as that of factory-workers. Proudhon's own trade was printing, although in 1844 he was earning his living mainly by acting in a managerial capacity for a small transport firm; so clearly if Marx was willing to call him a 'proletarian' he was using the term in accord with current French usage to include artisans. He had therefore not yet been won over by Engels' contention that factory-hands in big industrial cities were the 'natural' and best constituency for socialist ideas, and he was more attracted than Engels to Parisian artisan socialism.

In the winter of 1844-45, therefore, Marx was highly sympathetic to Proudhon's views, and, despite a few detailed criticisms, his extended remarks on Proudhon in The Holy Family were eulogistic.³ He did not, however, embrace all the main facets of Proudhon's thought: certain of the Frenchman's favourite doctrines found no immediate echo in his mind, and were disregarded entirely in his book. This was true, for example, of Proudhon's anti-étatiste hostility to even a governmental administration elected by universal suffrage, and also of his claim that capitalism would become increasingly impossible as an economic system because the producers would have insufficient income to consume all they

3. Die heilige Familie, MEGA I, 3, pp. 193-225; MECW, 4, pp. 23-54.

had grown and made. In short, Marx reserved his judgement on Proudhon's more extreme arguments. But, as The Holy Family reveals, there was much that he approved of in Qu'est-ce que la propriété? and, to a lesser extent, in De la création de l'ordre.

The Holy Family was a deceptive work. Ostensibly it was a satirical polemic against Bruno Bauer and his philosophical disciples, but Marx, scarcely realising what he was doing, turned it into a vehicle for expressing his judgments on Hegel, Proudhon, Fourier, eighteenth-century French materialism, the French Revolution, and the state of contemporary France. Beneath the surface it was as much about French philosophy, politics and socialist theory as about Young Hegelianism, and its chief purpose was to defend the French socialist tradition against what Marx considered to be stupid and ill-informed attacks by German liberals.

By the summer of 1844, Marx, as we have seen, had dissociated himself from Young Hegelianism, broken with Bauer and Ruge, and discarded Hegel's methodology as intellectually dishonest and 'mystifying'. The manuscripts in which he had begun to explore the inadequacies of Hegelianism were, however, unpublished, and he was anxious to explain in print why German speculative philosophy should be abandoned for French social science. Moreover, his critique of Idealism had, by October 1844, attained a new clarity. Engels had shared with Marx his enthusiasm for the works of Helvetius and D'Holbach (as well as for later thinkers like Fourier,

Bentham, Owen and Godwin whose intellectual roots were in Enlightenment scientism), and, taking his advice, Marx in the fall of 1844 set about studying the history of the empiricist tradition in European philosophy. He concentrated in particular on eighteenth century French materialism, which he perceived to be one of the theoretical sources of contemporary French socialism. While he did not explicitly espouse a 'materialist' viewpoint in The Holy Family, he evidently saw the merits of a 'hard-line' empiricist approach to the problem of knowledge better than he had previously. He had never before understood properly the methodological and epistemological presuppositions of seventeenth-century British and Enlightenment scientism, but now he grasped the appeal of the Baconian/Lockean alternative to Idealism. He gave the general label 'materialism' to this Anglo-French tradition, and his attitude to it was sympathetic if not uncritical. Thus, without fully endorsing eighteenth century 'materialism', he used empiricism as a general intellectual base from which to assail metaphysical philosophy in general and Hegelianism in particular.⁴

A detailed analysis of Marx's critique of Hegel in The Holy Family would be peripheral to the main thrust of this thesis, but his comments on Proudhon can be easily misconstrued unless one recognises that he was in this book categorically and explicitly rejecting Hegel's teleological

4. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 300-311; MECW, 4, pp. 124-135.

philosophy of history as well as his speculative philosophical method. Marx found in Proudhon's work an alternative, empirically-based, 'scientific' method which was not a priori like Hegel's, but which did (so he judged) penetrate beneath surface phenomena to underlying realities. He had this alternative method in mind when he criticised Hegel's 'logic' in The Holy Family, and evidently believed it was immune from the attacks he was launching against Hegelianism.

He offered four principal criticisms of Hegel. The most celebrated was a satirical discussion, using the terminology and procedures of Hegel's 'logic', of the concept 'fruit' -- this was intended to demonstrate the barrenness of philosophical speculation.⁵ Secondly, he followed Feuerbach in arguing that Hegel, (and for that matter the 'Critical Critics' too), had adopted such an abstract form of reasoning that they had lost contact with "real human beings". When viewed through the distorting lenses of a grandiose thought-system, he remarked, the ideals, decisions and actions of men seemed "infinitely small" and inconsequential, so that the speculative system-builder was all too ready to discount them. By seeing men as tools and victims of the 'cunning of reason', Hegel had reduced them to pawns in an abstract historical scheme over which they had no control, and, as he himself had admitted, had made his system a sophisticated

5. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 227-232; MECW, 4, pp. 57-61.

theodicy.⁶ This claim that Hegel had substituted abstractions for real men led Marx to his third major criticism: that the Hegelian philosophy of history was methodologically unsound. Hegelian teleology, he asserted, imposed an unwarranted inevitabilism on the course of history which denied human freedom. Bruno Bauer had fallen into precisely the same trap; imitating Hegel, he had written into his historiography a supra-historical meaning which he claimed to have detected in the evolution of human civilisation.⁷ Marx categorically rejected this kind of teleological fatalism. He opposed it partly because he had now rejected a priori philosophising for empirical research into the socio-economic determinants of historical change, and partly because he regarded this 'inevitabilism' as an apologia for the status-quo.

His fourth line of attack was against Hegel's conservatism. Despite the "destructive" insights scattered throughout its pages, the Phänomenologie (the work of Hegel's of which he thought most highly) was now in Marx's view ultimately a "most conservative philosophy", because it dissolved the practical problems of the real world into an "ether of pure thought".⁸ Hegelian political philosophy was now quite unacceptable to him. Hegel and his disciples, he

6. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 250-251 & 257-258; MECW, 4, pp. 79-80 & 85-87.

7. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 250-252; MECW, 4, p. 79.

8. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 370; MECW, 4, p. 192.

charged, had made a fetish out of the state, turning a practical institution into a philosophical ideal. In consequence they had confused the state with the citizens and political liberty with "human emancipation", making politics and government ends in themselves rather than means to creating a better social order. Further, they had employed their abstract philosophy of history as an intellectual weapon against those demanding democracy, by offering 'Abstract Spirit' rather than the popular will as the ultimate criterion in accord with which legislation should be framed. Hegelian political theory had thus played the same role in practice in Germany as the conservative liberalism of the doctrinaires in France, "proclaiming the sovereignty of reason in opposition to the sovereignty of the people, in order to exclude the masses and rule alone".⁹ Marx had thus worked out where, in his opinion, Hegel belonged in the political spectrum: alongside moderate constitutional monarchists like Royer-Collard and Guizot who believed the franchise should be restricted to a small number of wealthy property-owners. Hegelian historiography was thus not only disguised theology, it was élitist political ideology as well.¹⁰

9. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 257; MECW, 4, p. 85. The doctrinaires were a group of moderate liberal politicians and academics who formed part of the legal opposition under the Restoration Monarchy and subsequently supported the 1830 Revolution and the July Monarchy. The best known were the philosopher Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard and the historian François Guizot, the latter becoming Minister of Education and later Prime Minister under Louis Philippe.

10. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 257; MECW, 4, p.85.

In The Holy Family, then, Marx charged Hegel with the kind of 'historicism' for which he himself has so often been criticised. He presumably considered his own more empirical approach to history exempt from this accusation, and he certainly meant to avoid the pitfalls of teleological inevitabilism. Yet in this same work he penned his first firm assertion that a proletarian revolution was inevitable, or more precisely, "compelling" and "necessary".¹¹ He made only one such statement in the book compared to numerous denunciations of Hegelianism, but it indicated unequivocally that he now conceived the working classes (factory-hands and artisans) as having the 'historical role' of emancipating the whole of humanity. Understandably, then, it has been supposed by some commentators that his anti-Hegelianism was only skin-deep, and that he had retained Hegel's 'historicism' in a slightly modified form. This interpretation, while superficially plausible, can only be sustained, however, if one presumes Marx to have been inconsistent and confused, if one ignores his intellectual development during the previous two years (and especially after arriving in Paris), and if one forgets the context of the crucial passage. In fact the statement in question was part of Marx's explanation of Proudhon's achievements as a socialist economist, and his meaning becomes clear only when one understands why he thought so highly of Proudhon.

11. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p.207; MECW, 4, p. 37.

He credited Proudhon with a revolution in political economy. Proudhon, he claimed, was the first to have made a ruthless, critical, 'scientific' investigation into the institution on which the contemporary economy was based: private property. He had made a "great scientific advance" which had made a real science of political economy possible for the first time ever. "Proudhon's treatise Qu'est-ce que la propriété?", he remarked, "is as important for modern political economy as Sieyès' work Qu'est-ce que le tiers état? for modern politics".¹²

What exactly had Proudhon done, and what were the fruits of his analysis? Marx divided the French socialist's achievements into seven categories. The first was methodological. Proudhon had, he suggested, pioneered the sociological analysis of capitalism, that is, he had devised a way of penetrating the social relationships inherent in economic relationships, and vice-versa. He had indicated, albeit in a sketchy and rather general fashion, how the various facets of the capitalist economy -- capital, commerce, credit, wage-labour, etc. -- all had their roots in one fundamental social institution: large-scale private ownership of land and workshops.¹³ By so doing, Marx argued, Proudhon had made possible his second major contribution: his exposé of classical political economy as either self-contradictory or

12. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 201; MECW, 4, p. 32.

13. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 201-205; MECW, 4, pp. 32-35.

immoral. There was in the writings of most classical economists, Marx pointed out, a continual tension between an 'economic' standpoint and a humanitarian point of view, because they were aware of some of the more regrettable consequences of laissez-faire. Adam Smith on occasion polemicised against grasping entrepreneurs, Destutt de Tracy against money-lenders, Ricardo against landed property, and Sismondi against the factory system. Proudhon, however, had demonstrated that this compromise was unviable. He had revealed a fundamental contradiction within classical economics between its premiss that economic relationships should be free and rational contracts between human beings, and its acceptance of private property, an institution which made economic relationships hostile and coercive. He had thus proved that the capitalist system was inherently inhumane, not just occasionally so, and that economics henceforth had to either rationalise this inhumanity (in which case it would be openly immoral) or denounce it (in which case it would be socialist).¹⁴

Marx judged that Proudhon's critique, although valid, was merely destructive, and that the Frenchman had not as yet created a satisfactory alternative to the orthodox political economy he had demolished. On detailed points of economic theory he had in his published works taken over the concepts and theorems of the liberals, and, unlike Engels in the "Out-

14. Ibid.

lines of a Critique of Political Economy" had failed to criticise them in detail as a prolegomenon to transforming them for use in a new socialist economics. Proudhon's critique of classical political economy, devastating though it was in some respects, was therefore in Marx's opinion limited. He argued that it was necessary to go beyond it and survey in a detailed, thorough and systematic way what was wrong with the 'science' as currently formulated. This was what he himself now planned to do. But he recognised that such an enterprise would be indebted not only to Proudhon but to other French socialists and also to the Ricardian school.¹⁵

Proudhon's exposé of liberal economics, as Marx interpreted it, was logically dependent on the claim that capitalism per se (as a system of economic relationships built on private property) was inherently inhumane. He considered that Proudhon's third great achievement had been in demonstrating irrefutably why this was so. He credited the French socialist with proving in detail how private property, transformed into active capital, necessarily produced poverty. Marx was alluding here to Proudhon's attempt to show mathematically in Qu'est-ce que la propriété? that, as the percentage of the national product taken in rent and interest increased, the mass of peasants, artisans and labourers would

15. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 201; MECW, 4, p. 31.

become more and more impoverished.¹⁶ Without being prepared to draw the 'catastrophic' conclusions that Proudhon did, he apparently, at this time, accepted the logic of the simple 'underconsumptionist' argument that capitalists and landlords were non-productive parasites who drained wealth from the hands of the real producers and left them short of the resources they needed for consumption and investment, thus hampering economic growth. Marx was not, however, interested in the long-term consequences Proudhon had suggested would follow from this 'parasitism', viz the eventual breakdown of the capitalist economy. For him the most important fruit of the Frenchman's analysis was that the current economic system was founded on the antithesis of 'wealth' and 'proletariat', and the realisation that capital needed wage-labour in order to exist and multiply. He believed that Proudhon had located the structural dynamic of the capitalist economy: the extraction, by means of private property, of capital from the propertyless proletariat, a process which entailed that as national wealth expanded and the stock of capital possessed by land-owners and entrepreneurs grew, the propertyless masses would become ever larger and poorer.¹⁷

16. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 205; MECW, 4, p. 35. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Qu'est-ce que la propriété? ou recherches sur le principe du droit et du gouvernement, Paris, Brocard, 1840. English translation, What is Property? (ed. Benjamin Tucker), N.Y., Dover, 1970.

17. Marx, Die heilige Familie, MEGA I, 3, pp. 205 & 221-223; MECW, 4, pp. 34-35 & 50-52.

Marx thus considered that Proudhon had demonstrated that the 'exploitative structure' or internal mechanism of capitalism condemned the working-classes (including peasants renting land or in debt) to progressive impoverishment. Their conditions of life would become increasingly inhuman and intolerable, he reasoned, and so they would be eventually driven to revolt, to create a class-conscious labour movement, and to emancipate themselves by abolishing capitalism. Following Proudhon, he viewed this future development as necessary in the sense of a result of "absolutely imperative need"; his concept of historical necessity was thus practical and causal rather than 'logical' or teleological.¹⁸ So if Marx did espouse a doctrine of the historical inevitability of the proletarian revolution in The Holy Family, it was a different kind of 'inevitability' to Hegel's. Under the influence of Proudhon he adopted -- temporarily, and for the first time in his career -- a thoroughly deterministic viewpoint, according to which socio-economic forces compelled certain mental and physical responses by their human victims. There was nothing teleological about this conception -- it was straightforward environmental determinism.

Marx slipped into this causal, deterministic mode of thought only once in The Holy Family, so it would be unwarranted to conclude from this paragraph alone that he had

18. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 227; MECW, 4, p. 37.

switched intellectual camps completely. But he was clearly attracted to positivistic social science, and there are other grounds for supposing that he was flirting with a deterministic perspective on social phenomena. The other French socialist whose influence occasionally shone through the rhetorical verbiage of The Holy Family was Fourier, who regarded himself as the Newton of the social sciences on account of his putative discovery of the universal law of 'passional attraction'.¹⁹ And secondly, as mentioned earlier, Marx had begun to study seventeenth-and eighteenth-century British and French empiricist philosophy, and was fascinated by Enlightenment materialism. So if he did indeed believe in a form of 'historical inevitability' in the last months of 1844, the evidence would seem to suggest that his perspective was embryonically positivist rather than Hegelian.

The fourth debt that Marx thought modern socialism owed to Proudhon was his denunciation of private property as incompatible with equality. Proudhon, he maintained, had shown conclusively that the Fourierists and Saint-Simonians

19. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 201, 253-258 & 372-379; MECW, 4, pp. 31, 81-88 & 194-201. Charles Fourier's major works published in his lifetime were: Théorie des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales, Lyon, Pelzin, 1808; Traité de l'association domestique-agricole, Paris, Bossange, 1822; Le nouveau monde industriel et sociétaire, Paris, Bossange, 1829-30; La fausse industrie, 2 vols, Paris, Bossange, 1835-36. The first three of these books were reprinted as vols 1-6 of Oeuvres complètes (eds. J. Muiron & V. Considerant), Paris, Bureau de la Phalange, 1840-45, in which the Traité was retitled Théorie de l'unité universelle. Marx consulted these six volumes when writing Die heilige Familie.

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were in error in hoping to transform society without abolishing private ownership. He also made the argument that since equality was a rational goal, and since

the existence of private property proved that it was irrational, then private property had to be abolished as 'irrational' and 'self-contradictory'.²⁰ Marx also accepted without qualms the Proudhonian goals of equality and social justice, arguing that these values were in any case a logical extension of Feuerbach's humanist philosophy with its stress on man's consciousness of his unity with his species. He accepted too another implication of Proudhon's assault on property in the name of reason and equality, an implication which, he asserted, Proudhon himself had failed to perceive. If private property were inherently 'irrational', then the existence in contemporary Europe of a social regime based on individual ownership could not be justified 'rationally' by a historian -- at best it could be explained 'pragmatically' by empirical research. In short, the very existence of capitalism proved that the Hegelian assumption that the entire course of history exhibited a rational pattern was misguided.²¹

Marx also praised Proudhon for recognising that poverty was dehumanising, and for making the problem of poverty the centre of his analysis.²² This, indeed, was one of

20. Marx, Die heilige Familie, MEGA I, 3, pp. 209-221; MECW, 4, pp. 39-50.

21. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 211-213 & 250-257; MECW, 4, pp. 41-43 & 80-85.

22. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 212; MECW, 4, p. 42.

the most powerful bonds between Marx and Proudhon during these months: their common conviction that the spiritual malaise in contemporary society could be traced back via the inequality, injustice and poverty caused by the economic system to its roots in the institution of private property. Marx, however, suggested that Proudhon had failed to follow through the logic of his own attacks on private property. He realised that Proudhon in fact supported small-scale private ownership where the land, machinery or buildings were used by the owner himself to make a living; this petty ownership the Frenchman called 'possession', suggesting that every citizen had a right to such possessions but that no-one should be allowed to own that which he could not use personally. His ideal was a society in which everyone would possess as much land, etc., as he needed, and no more; it would have a non-capitalist economy consisting of millions of independent peasant and artisan producers, in which wage-labour, rent, interest, and large-scale capital accumulation, would all be banned. Marx did not attack this as unrealistic or anachronistic, but he did criticise Proudhon's ideal of 'equal possession' as narrowly economic in conception. Proudhon's socialism, he believed, betrayed the influence of English classical economics -- it was too individualistic, and Proudhon's ideal society would only partially abolish alienation.²³

23. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 201 & 212-213; MECW, 4, pp. 31 & 42-43.

Like Engels, Marx had now become convinced that only a communitarian society would be able to overcome all the evils, ethical as well as economic, of contemporary capitalism. His conversion to communism was thus completed in the fall of 1844, and may be ascribed to the joint influence of Proudhon and Engels. Engels helped break down his previous hostility to communism by showing him that versions other than Icarianism and Babouvism were possible, while Proudhon convinced him that it was theoretically unviable to stop short of the abolition of private ownership of land and workshops. Thus, even though Marx thought Proudhon was illogical to reject communism, he wholeheartedly endorsed his arguments against private ownership, and specifically defended in The Holy Family his refutation of Charles Comte's Traité de la propriété, which had attempted to justify private property in land.²⁴ He regarded Proudhon's first mémoire, notwithstanding its author's later qualifications to the argument, as a powerful and sweeping repudiation of the very foundations of the existing economic order. And, despite his criticism that Proudhon's economic theories were uncritically dependent on liberal doctrines in matters of detail, he also enthusiastically accepted several of the Frenchman's specifically economic arguments. Indeed, he asserted that Proudhon's original ideas on political economy were his most valuable achievements.

24. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 214-216; MECW, 4, pp. 44-46.

The French socialist's sixth major contribution to 'scientific' theory, according to Marx, was his adaptation of Smith's labour theory of value. Marx accepted Proudhon's distinction between the 'intrinsic value' of a commodity and its exchange-value in the market at any given time, and was persuaded that price fluctuations (caused by the vagaries of supply and demand) occurred around a level determined by more stable factors: the costs of production. Liberal economics, he noted, usually included in these costs raw materials, labour, rent, interest and profit, whereas Proudhon correctly reduced them to one: labour time, by arguing that in a non-propertarian economy interest and profit would not exist and raw materials and land would be gratis to whomsoever desired to use them. On Proudhon's reasoning, then, the 'intrinsic value' of a product was determined exclusively by the amount of labour-time required to make it or grow it. Marx accepted this labour theory of value, and also Proudhon's dictum that labour-time was consequently the 'true' measure of correct wages.²⁵ He was aware that Proudhon had taken his labour theories of value and wages from Adam Smith, but he gave the French socialist the credit for perceiving their utility for the projected new science of social economics. Although he had himself read Smith's The Wealth of Nations, it was Proudhon who converted him to the Smithian theory of value, and who showed him how it could be used to

25. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 219; MECW, 4, p. 49.

expose rent, profit and interest as surcharges on productive labour.

Finally, Marx was most enthusiastic about Proudhon's discussion of the "interest and profit system", and pronounced it "the most important part of his argument". He claimed that by means of his analysis of credit, rent and profit, Proudhon had explained the mechanism whereby capital exploited wage-labour. The Frenchman, he wrote, "was the first to draw attention to the fact that...the worker is not paid as a part of the collective labour process", i.e., he had pointed out that the value to the entrepreneur of the collective labour of his employees was more than the sum of what he paid them individually, and that from this surplus he paid rent and interest, retaining the remainder as profit.²⁶ Proudhon, in a word, had proposed a crude version of what Marx was later to refine into the Marxian theory of surplus-value. It was thus from Proudhon that Marx derived one of the fundamental insights which guided his later economic researches.

The Holy Family, therefore, makes it clear that Marx was heavily indebted intellectually to Proudhon at the end of 1844. This debt may be summarised as follows. Proudhon had converted Marx to a form of communism by convincing him that private property necessarily produced injustice, inequality and poverty. He had shown him that the capitalist

26. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 222-223; MECW, 4, pp. 51-52.

economic system was inherently inhumane, and any attempt to justify it theoretically must transgress humanitarian values. He had demonstrated how the economic relationship between worker and capitalist was exploitative, and he had provided him with socialist theories of wages, prices and profits. Marx recognised that even if in his opinion the Frenchman had emancipated himself insufficiently from the doctrines of Smith and Say, he had laid several foundation-stones upon which a socialist political economy could be built.

During the months he was writing The Holy Family Marx was also reading Fourier. Although he had been aware of Fourierism for a couple of years and, as I have argued earlier, was almost certainly familiar with some of Considerant's writings, he apparently had not studied the 'master's' own works before. Before the 1840s most of Fourier's main works had been out of print, but in 1840 Considerant and Muiron began publishing an edition of Oeuvres complètes which, although left unfinished for financial reasons, made available several of Fourier's major books. Marx perused in this edition the Théorie des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales, the Théorie de l'unité universelle, and Le nouveau monde industriel et sociétaire (these comprised all six volumes of the Oeuvres published between 1840 and 1845), as well as some smaller pieces printed in the Fourierist theoretical journal, La Phalange: revue de la science sociale,

with which he was familiar.²⁷ His revived interest in Fourier was stimulated in part by Engels' enthusiasm for this pioneering critic of commercial capitalism and bourgeois social relations, but it may well have been Proudhon who finally persuaded him to disregard the superficial eccentricities of Fourier's speculations and study his ideas seriously. Proudhon, Marx perceived, was more heavily indebted to Fourier than he cared to admit, and he concluded that the latter deserved to be recognised, along with Saint-Simon (whose own works he now also resolved to read), as the originator of French socialist political economy.

In The Holy Family, however, Marx largely ignored Fourier's views on economics and finance. He was impressed more by his perspective on French history, his critique of bourgeois values, and his general remarks on human nature. Marx had never discarded his early Condorcet-like faith in progress, a faith which had been reinforced by his years as a Young Hegelian. But, as we have seen, he also had a strong sense of the decadence of nineteenth-century European society, an outlook initially derived from German Romanticism but reinforced by his discovery of the 'social problem' in Paris. These two perspectives could not be easily reconciled, and during 1844 they co-existed uncomfortably in Marx's mind. He

27. See note 19 for details of Fourier's main works published between 1808 and 1845. In Die heilige Familie Marx quoted from Le nouveau monde industriel et sociétaire, Théorie des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales, & Théorie de l'unité universelle; MEGA I, 3, pp. 374-375; MECU, 4, p. 196.

learned with interest that Fourier had struggled with the same problem and suggested a fruitful way of handling it -- admitting the existence of intellectual and political progress but pointing out that this had had deleterious results for the lower classes. Fourier and Owen, noted Marx, had declared the advances achieved since the Middle Ages to be inadequate because they had correctly perceived a "fundamental flaw" in the civilised world; they had recognised that, notwithstanding scientific discoveries and increasing wealth, "on the one hand even the most favourably brilliant deeds seemed to remain without brilliant results, and, on the other, all progress of the (human) spirit had so far been progress against the mass of mankind, driving it into an ever more dehumanising situation".²⁸ The rise of the bourgeoisie had thus involved two interlinked processes: intellectual and political advance, coupled with social and economic retrogression. This formula, suitably modified, helped Marx pin down his attitude to capitalist society: culturally, politically, and technologically it was progressive, he decided, but these 'plus' factors should never be allowed to conceal that the economy was exploitative, human relations antagonistic, and the dominant value-system immoral.

Another aspect of Fourier's approach to recent history also appealed to Marx. He remarked that Fourier had seen contemporary French society as the outcome of an inter-

28. Die heilige Familie, MEGA I, 3, n. 256; MECU, 4, p. 84.

play between ideals and interests. Dividing history into successive epochs, Fourier had suggested that each epoch possessed its own characteristic 'tone' or atmosphere, deriving from the ideas and values dominant in society at the time.²⁹ During the French Revolution, for example, the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity had captured the popular imagination, and this vision of emancipation had determined the 'tone' of the period although it implied a social transformation which went well beyond that desired by the majority of revolutionaries. The material interests of the revolutionary bourgeoisie were more prosaic since, as non-noble property-owners, they wanted merely a representative government elected by limited suffrage which would guarantee free-trade, press freedom, a modern legal system, orderly administration, and security of property. This moderate liberalism, dictated by the interests of the social class which had obtained power as a result of the Revolution, was at odds with the more radical demands of the urban masses who took seriously the ideals proclaimed by Marat and Robespierre. Marx recognised that interests and ideas were often in conflict in this way, and he thought that in practice interests almost always won out, which meant that the 'tone' of an epoch was frequently deceptive, as the French Revolution had illustrated.³⁰ Fourier thus stimulated him

29. Ibid., MEGA I, 3, p. 253; MECW, 4, p. 81.

30. Ibid.

to ponder the complicated relationship between ideas and class interests, making him more aware of the power as well as the limits of political ideology. It therefore seems reasonable to see Marx's reading of Fourier as one of the sources of the 'materialist view of history' which he was to elaborate a year later in The German Ideology.

Fourier also reinforced Marx's disgust with the values and life-style of the European middle classes. He expressed great admiration for the Frenchman's scathing analysis of the institution of bourgeois marriage, quoting passages on the subject from three of his books.³¹ He also endorsed his critique of upper-class morality as a *mélange* of paternalistic philanthropy -- an ethic which, he remarked, was available "only to millionaires" -- and theological guilt. Fourier was correct, he argued, in regarding the concept of 'sin' as a form of enslavement, and in rejecting a Christian ethic based on abnegation, repentance, and self-punishment as fundamentally incompatible with human dignity.³² Marx was sympathetic, too, towards the libertarian morality that Fourier wanted to put in the place of Christianity. Appreciating the French theorist's stress on the creative value of human impulses and passions if properly channelled, he agreed that men required variety in their daily activities if they were to realise their full potential as human beings.

31. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 374-375; MECW, 4, p. 196.

32. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 347-355; MECW, 4, pp. 170-177.

When its implications were correctly understood, he contended, Fourier's assertion that man had an 'inborn right' to fish, hunt, and carry on a gamut of other 'natural' occupations was a remark of "genius".³³ He thus accepted Fourier's claim that a properly organised, humane and rational society would ensure that labour was varied and enjoyable, and that this should be one of the chief goals of socialism.

Reacting against the element of religiosity he detected in some branches of French socialism (e.g., in Cabet's and Pecqueur's writings), Marx applauded the secular, even anti-clerical, outlook of Fourier and Proudhon as 'scientific'. Their work, he noted, was in the tradition of eighteenth-century French materialism, and this realisation plunged him back into the history of French thought to search for the roots of modern socialism.³⁴ Once engaged on a course of study, Marx characteristically pursued it until he was satisfied that he had comprehended the whole subject. His investigation of the genesis of French socialism led him to sketch for himself the pre-history of European positivism, and to work out an interpretation of the Enlightenment and subsequent European intellectual history.

There was currently emerging in several European countries, he suggested, a new kind of 'philosophy' very different from traditional metaphysics. He sometimes labelled

33. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 259; MECW, 4, p. 88.

34. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 307-308; MECW, 4, pp. 130-131.

this new outlook modern 'materialism' and at other times referred to it as a new 'humanism', but there was no question in his mind that it was social in orientation, empirical in method, and humanitarian in values. Represented in Germany by Feuerbach, he thought it had found expression in France and Britain primarily in the writings of socialist thinkers. The new mode of thought, he argued, included a comprehensive critique of theology and speculative metaphysics, and this was where Feuerbach had made his vital contribution by demolishing the Hegelian system, the culmination of nineteenth-century German metaphysical philosophy. But nineteenth-century German Idealism had itself been a revival of the seventeenth-century metaphysical systems of Leibniz, Spinoza, Descartes and Malebranche, so in undercutting Hegelianism Feuerbach was repeating the intellectual work of seventeenth-century British and eighteenth-century French critics of this earlier metaphysical philosophy. The French Enlightenment had in fact produced a well developed materialist philosophy, and philosophes like Diderot had waged a double struggle against existing political institutions and religion on the one hand and against seventeenth-century metaphysics on the other. It was therefore not surprising, he argued, that the new socialist 'humanism'/'materialism' had close affinities with the older materialism of the more daring philosophes. When it came down to it, Feuerbach's role in the evolution of German thought was to remind philosophers

and socialists about the forgotten heritage of the French Enlightenment.³⁵

Marx suggested that, like Feuerbach, the philosophes and their socialist descendants like Fourier had realised that if human knowledge was totally the produce of sensory experience, and if men were shaped by their environment, then this environment had to be made human. Further, if men were products of society, it was no use punishing individuals for crimes; rather the "anti-social sources of crime must be destroyed, and each man given social scope for the vital manifestation of his being". Similarly, if the utilitarians were right in seeing self-interest as the principle of all morality, then society would have to be reconstructed so that private interests coincided with the interests of humanity as a whole. And finally, the philosophes had perceived that if man was social by nature, he could develop his 'true' nature only in a rational and humane society. Consequently, he concluded, it was quite obvious that Enlightenment teaching on "the original goodness and equal intellectual endowment of men, the omnipotence of experience, habit and education, the influence of environment on man, the great significance of industry, the justification of enjoyment, etc.," was necessarily "connected with communism and socialism". One had only to develop logically the implications of the philosophes' arguments to arrive at con-

35. Ibid, MECA I, 3, pp. 301 & 316-318; MECU, 4, pp. 125 & 139-141.

temporary French socialism.³⁶

Having established the socialist credentials of eighteenth-century French materialism in this way, Marx pursued the origins of this empiricist intellectual tradition. He traced it back as far as Bacon and Descartes. The Cartesian dualism of mind and matter had given rise, he explained, not only to Descartes' own metaphysical system but also to a school of French physicists whose views on epistemology and scientific method were staunchly anti-metaphysical. Their crude, mechanistic materialism had been set out systematically by Cabanis in Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme.³⁷ Eighteenth-century philosophes like La Mettrie were considerably indebted to this group, as they were to the robust scepticism of Pierre Bayle. But the French Enlightenment, Marx recognised, was as much grounded in seventeenth-century English thought as in French. One of its seminal works, Condillac's Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines, a refutation of Descartes, Leibniz and others, had borrowed its principal arguments from Locke, who himself had developed the ideas of the founders of English empiricism, Bacon and Hobbes.³⁸ Enlightenment materialism at its most

36. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 307-308; MECU, 4, pp. 130-131.

37. P-J-G. Cabanis, Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme, 2 vols, Paris, Baillière, 1843 (first édition, 1802), mentioned in Die heilige Familie, MEGA I, 3, p. 302; MECU, 4, p. 126.

38. Etienne B. de Condillac, Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines, Amsterdam, Mortier, 1746; cited in Die heilige Familie, MEGA I, 3, p. 306; MECU, 4, p. 129.

sophisticated in Helvetius' De l'homme and D'Holbach's Système de la nature thus combined the fruits of French scientific thought and English philosophy -- it was a synthesis of two early forms, Cartesian physics and Baconian empiricism.³⁹ Then, according to Marx, it had in turn provided the starting-point for later British and French thinkers, including the Utilitarians, Robert Owen, and several sects of French socialism. Fourier, for example, proceeded directly from the teaching of the eighteenth-century materialists, and the Babouvists too were "crude, uncivilised materialists" who had vulgarised the ideas of the philosophes. The materialism of the salons had also been re-exported to England in the late eighteenth century; Bentham's "system of correctly understood interest" was derived from Helvetius' utilitarian ethics, and Robert Owen's communist doctrines were largely based on the ideas of Bentham. Icarianism also derived indirectly from the French Enlightenment, because Cabet had come under the influence of Owenism while exiled in England, and then on his return to France had become "the most popular, if the most superficial, representative of communism".⁴⁰

39. C.A. Helvetius, De l'homme et de ses facultés intellectuelles et de son éducation, 2 vols, Londres, Société typographique, 1773; P-H-D. d'Holbach (anon), Système de la nature, ou des loix du monde physique et du monde moral, 2 vols, Londres, n.p., 1770. Cited by Marx, Die heilige Familie, MEGA I, 3, pp. 306-307 & 309-310; MECW, 4, pp. 130 & 133.

40. Die heilige Familie, MEGA I, 3, p. 308; MECW, 4, p. 131.

Previously Marx had been consistently hostile to what he perceived as the primitive, utopian, and authoritarian communism of the Babouvists and Icarians. He still did not think very highly of these sects, but his attitude was nonetheless changing. Engels' insistence that Icarianism was the French counterpart of Owenism and highly important because of its mass working-class following had partly broken down his erstwhile hostility to Cabot. He now knew more about the French Revolution and its aftermath, and had begun to sympathise with the sans-culottes; he saw Babouvism as a continuation of enragé ideology, and regarded it with a less jaundiced eye as an understandable left-wing response to the 'betrayal' of the Revolution by the Directory and Napoleon. And above all, he had realised that Dézamy and Gay, like Fourier, were the legitimate intellectual heirs of the philosophes he admired. Their materialism, he now perceived, was no intransigent concern with the welfare of the body to the exclusion of the mind; on the contrary, they possessed a relatively sophisticated philosophical analysis and a humanitarian ethic. Like Owen, he remarked, "the more scientific French communists, Dézamy, Gay and others, developed the teaching of real humanism and the logical basis of communism."⁴¹

If Marx had established to his own satisfaction that much Enlightenment thought was implicitly socialist, his

41. Ibid.

study of documents and mémoire material from the French Revolution had convinced him that French socialism proper had its origins in the 1790s and French communism in the Napoleonic aftermath. In practice, he argued, the French Revolution was a bourgeois affair which cleared the way for modern capitalism, but it had also given birth to ideas, which, although they could not be implemented at the time, went far beyond the bourgeois 'world order'. The starting-point of this ideological revolution, he suggested, was Claude Fauchet's Cercle social; this group's egalitarian outlook had been developed by the spokesmen for the enragés, Jacques Roux and Theophile Leclerc; and their embryonic socialism had in turn been transformed into primitive communism by Babeuf and Buonarroti. Marx admitted that the views of the enragés and Babouvists were crude, naive, and even "uncivilised", and he disliked their penchant for violence. Nevertheless, he claimed, they both desired an egalitarian, non-capitalist society, and possessed a vision, which, if "consistently developed", contained "the idea of the new world order". In short, one could not and should not deny their roles as precursors of contemporary French socialism.⁴²

We have seen that Marx, following Fourier, distinguished among the revolutionaries of 1789-94 between those who acted in accord with the material interests of the non-aristocratic property-owners and those whose deeds were

42. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 294-295; MECU, 4, p. 119.

charged with a passionate commitment to more far-reaching revolutionary ideals. The Hébertist de-christianisation policy was one example of such unrealistic idealism, he thought, and in his opinion Robespierre and St. Just also fell into this second category. Not only were they genuinely committed to the ideals of liberty, justice and virtue, they correctly believed that these goals could be realised through the creation of a "popular community" akin to those allegedly established by the Athenians, Spartans and Romans. Marx sympathised with the 'communitarian' vision he detected behind the politics of the Committee of Public Safety, but he judged the attempt to implement it premature. The Robespierriest party fell, he explained, precisely because it failed to understand that the evolution of French society had not progressed far enough for a democratic "commonweal" of this type; in practice at the end of the eighteenth century the 'rights of man' could mean no more than "modern bourgeois society, the society of industry, of universal competition, of private interest freely pursuing its aims, of anarchy, of self-estranged natural and spiritual individualism".⁴³

The period of the Terror was thus in Marx's view an aberration which did not express the reality of the French Revolution. He interpreted Jacobinism as an "extravagance" which simultaneously reached back anachronistically to a golden age in the ancient world and reached forward utopianly

43. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 298; MECW, 4, p. 122.

towards a social democracy which would become feasible only in the nineteenth century. The Directory, he asserted, was the real political expression of bourgeois society, and after Thermidor the bourgeoisie was at last able to mould France in its image.⁴⁴ But if the French bourgeois revolution had been successful in 1794, what was the significance of Bonaparte's coup d'état of November 1799? Marx interpreted the advent of Napoleon's dictatorship as a temporary defeat for the liberal bourgeoisie. Bonapartism, he suggested, was a partial throwback to Jacobinism, because both were opposed to the untrammelled expression of commercial capitalism. According to his rather schematic perspective, Napoleon therefore "represented the last battle of revolutionary terror against the (new) bourgeois society" and, in a sense, Bonapartism perfected the Terror by "substituting permanent war for permanent revolution".⁴⁵

This anti-liberal, anti-bourgeois side of Napoleon was not the whole story, however. Marx suggested that while Bonaparte sacrificed French trade and industry to his policy of foreign conquest and suppressed liberalism through press censorship and personal rule, he nonetheless maintained the modern bourgeois state established by the Revolution. His administration provided security for private property, and allowed business to function freely whenever it did not

44. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 298-299; MECW, 4, pp. 122-123.

45. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 299; MECW, 4, p. 123.

conflict with his political ambitions. The Napoleonic era thus did not reverse the course of the bourgeois revolution, it merely temporarily stopped it in its tracks, limiting its full social impact for a while. Nevertheless, even if Bonapartism was in practice a compromise between authoritarianism and bourgeois capitalism, there was no love lost between Napoleon himself and the "hommes d'affaires", whom he scorned as much as the "idéologues". When they got a chance, claimed Marx, French businessmen had tried to hamper his policies and even overthrow him; for example, the Paris exchange brokers had forced him in 1812 by means of an artificially created famine to delay for two vital months the opening of his Russian campaign.⁴⁶ Outmanoeuvred in its attempts to create a constitutional monarchy on English lines in 1814 and 1815, the liberal bourgeoisie had remained as hostile to the Bourbon counter-revolution as it had been to the revival of "revolutionary terror in the person of Napoleon". But Marx believed that its efforts eventually had been crowned with success with the advent of the July Monarchy. "Finally in 1830", he concluded, "the bourgeoisie put into effect its wishes of the year 1789". But there was one crucial difference -- the liberals had now lost their idealistic illusions, and they no longer considered representative, constitutional government as the means of achieving universal welfare, liberty and an ideal state. Discarding such national and popular

46. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 299-300; MECW, 4, pp. 123-124.

aims, they openly acknowledged the new constitutional monarchy to be the political expression of exclusive and special interests of the bourgeoisie. The illusion of the French Revolution -- that the revolutionary bourgeoisie would act not in their own sectional interests but for the good of the whole national community -- was finally dispelled.⁴⁷

Marx's analysis of the underlying significance of the last fifty years of French history thus ended with the conclusion that the July Monarchy in essence represented the liberal bourgeoisie. As he saw it, it was a regime of merchants and industrialists, committed to the expansion of commerce and manufacturing and to the repression of the lower classes should they object to their subordinate position in social, economic and political life. He made no attempt, in The Holy Family, to analyse systematically the features of this class society, but in the course of his polemics he slipped in a number of hostile comments on the rulers of contemporary France, and quite a few favourable ones about the ruled. By assembling his remarks we can reconstruct something of his picture of urban France in the mid-1840s.

He was not much concerned with the French nobility, which he viewed as a relic of the past, doomed to gradual decomposition as an integral social group. Nor had he a great deal to say about the property-owning peasantry. In his eyes there were two Frances -- the France of the bour-

47. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 300; MECW, 4, p. 124.

geoisie, and the France of the workers. He saw French urban society as composed of these two antagonistic classes, and assumed each class to be relatively homogeneous. His remarks on the French bourgeoisie were limited to three topics: the nature of 'freedom' in bourgeois society, middle-class morality, and the class character of the modern state.

The advent to power of the French bourgeoisie, he argued, had meant that the 'rights of man' had ceased to be a slogan and had been implemented in reality. However, these freedoms turned out in practice under the July Monarchy to have a different meaning to that which they had appeared to have in theory. They merely recorded the fact that men had become, in a social system founded on unrestrained commerce and private property, "egoistic civil individuals" pursuing only their own self-interests. Thus, the French Constitution gave the individual the liberty to own property, but did not free the wage-labourer from the harmful effects of private ownership; it gave him the freedom to seek a gainful occupation, but did not free him from "the filth of gain"; it gave him religious toleration, but did not free him from religion because the state church still existed, as did, for many men, the shackles of theology. In short, it merely sanctioned the competitive scramble to satisfy selfish needs which was the basis of modern society.⁴⁸

48. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 287-288 & 291; MECW, 4, pp. 113 & 116.

In Marx's opinion France resembled the contemporary England of Engels' description: a social battlefield in which every lonely person was condemned to struggle unaided. The traditional privileges of nobility had been abolished, leaving a society in which there was virtually no interference with trade and industry. Frenchmen were no longer bound to other men by even a "semblance of a common bond" so that, as Marx put it, French 'civil society' was now no more than a universal conflict of "man against man, individual against individual". In appearance Frenchmen were perfectly free and independent. In reality, however, this anarchic freedom simply disguised a new kind of slavery to which the majority of the population was condemned. Marx did not bother to apply his theory of 'dehumanisation' in detail to Louis Philippe's regime, but his remarks left no doubt that he considered the France of the July Monarchy to be a paradigm of an 'alienated' society. Modern France was to Marx an excellent example of the social system produced by liberal capitalism: one in which "every person is at the same time a member of a slave society and of the public commonweal". He insisted that, appearances notwithstanding, 'real' freedom was lacking in bourgeois France. Everyday life was not fraternal and creative, but was subordinated to the "uncurbed" dominance of "property, industry (and) religion".⁴⁹

Marx's image of urban France was therefore very similar

49. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, pp. 291-292; MECW, 4, pp. 116-117.

to Engels' picture of English social life: a giant anthill in which the ants fought furiously with each other, believing themselves to be utterly free to pursue their own interests, but in fact in unwitting bondage to their own institutions and to economic laws beyond their control. He also shared Engels' contempt for the values of the most prosperous and powerful of these ants. Their commercial and financial dealings were fraudulent and grasping, he alleged, and their legal system was designed to sanction and protect the status quo. Their money and social rank allowed them to commit most crimes with impunity, and they ran their families like businesses, treating their wives like property and turning them into "narrow-hearted" self-seekers like themselves. Their morality, an uneasy combination of Pauline theology and utilitarianism, was fundamentally hostile to the human body and the Promethean spirit. The French middle-class life-style was, in a word, utterly repugnant to Marx -- he saw the mentality of the French bourgeois as permeated by the two things he found most distasteful, moralistic Christianity and the capitalist spirit.⁵⁰

Marx viewed the centralised governmental apparatus of the July Monarchy as a paradigm of the modern bourgeois state. The economic basis of this state, he maintained, was the abolition of privileged land-ownership, guilds, corpora-

50. *Ibid*, MEGA I, 3, pp. 247-248, 347-355, 368-369 & 387; MECW, 4, pp. 76, 170-177, 190-191 & 209.

tions, and other barriers to trade and industry; these reforms had created an open, competitive economy in which business flourished. The main function of the state, he added, was to keep wealth and property protected from the 'have-nots', and to guarantee the limited, practical 'rights' desired by the liberal property-owners. In reality, of course, it served to defend and perpetuate social and economic inequality. Not only were businessmen, and their spokesmen, the liberal economists, determined to prevent the government from interfering in the economy to reduce poverty, he alleged that they were also intent on maintaining a legal system accessible only to the wealthy, which left the poor "unequal before the law". The French governmental administration was thus designed to preserve 'law and order' but to do little else. The penal code, moreover, was barbaric and class-biased. It provided plenty of evidence for Robert Owen's contention that the differential treatment of rich and poor offenders by the property-owning judiciary was a way of reducing the lower classes to "servile abasement" and of "consecrating" divisions of social rank. Like Engels, Marx thus viewed the legal system as a coercive organ in the hands of the bourgeoisie, and to him there was no question but that the July Monarchy was a blatant class-state.⁵¹

His knowledge of the French working-class was still

51. Ibid, MEGA L, 3, pp. 226-227, 287-288, 291 & 365-369; MECW, 4, pp. 56, 113, 116 & 186-191.

relatively slight, and his overall picture of the 'proletariat' hazy. He saw workers as poor, virtuous, and potentially very powerful. Just how poverty-stricken they were he was unsure, but true to his new-found belief in empirical research he made an effort to calculate their living-standard. Relying on J.A.C. Chaptal's De l'industrie française, he stated that the average annual income for the worst-off half of the French population was about 120 francs per annum. This figure he claimed to be "less than is absolutely necessary for life", which left him with the problem of explaining how this half of the French nation survived. The answer was that most of these were peasants only partially dependent on cash incomes, which made average wages a poor guide to living standards; nevertheless Marx insisted that the level of existence of large numbers of Frenchmen must be poor because the average level of daily food consumption was so low: he had calculated that if all the meat produced in France were distributed equally there would be less than a quarter of a pound per person per day.⁵² However, Marx was not primarily interested in the life-style of the average peasant proprietor; he focussed on the seven and a half million Frenchmen who, according to Chaptal's statistics, existed on an average annual income of no more than 91 francs per head. These, he

52. Ibid. MEGA I, 3, pp. 376-379; MECW, 4, pp. 198-200. Marx was here heavily indebted to Jean A.C. Chaptal, De l'industrie française, Paris, Renouard, 1819.

assumed, were workers of one kind or another (artisans, urban wage-labourers, or farm labourers) and unemployed paupers; their cash incomes were below subsistence level, and so they presumably survived only by crime or charity. Poverty, he concluded, was clearly a major problem affecting a sizeable percentage of the French population.⁵³

Marx suggested two causes of pauperism. One was high and prolonged unemployment. In the seventh arrondissement of Paris alone, he asserted, there were 4,000 workers officially recognised as needy, and the average length of unemployment was over four months. He had no figures for the rest of France, but it seemed reasonable to him to deduce from this evidence that unemployment in France was probably severe and chronic, and that French capitalism was operating in an extremely inefficient manner. But, he added, there was another cause of poverty which was normally ignored by socialists who argued that the 'social problem' could be cured simply by an egalitarian redistribution of existing wealth. The fact was that France was not a wealthy country if one measured wealth in terms of the total annual income of the whole population; this, if divided equally, would give an average wage of 93 francs per person per annum, i.e., a figure below subsistence level. The current French population was thus larger than the present level of economic activity could support. Marx was pessimistic about the chances of raising

53. Ibid.

the incomes of the rural population by increasing agricultural efficiency, and he poured cold water on the suggestion that model farms should be set up to show the French peasant how to increase his productivity -- French farmers, he contended, were already very industrious.⁵⁴ The only solution, therefore, lay in industrialisation, but industrialisation so planned as to avoid over-production crises and mass unemployment in the urban centres.

Marx, who knew next to nothing about the structure and techniques of the Lyon silk industry, apparently assumed that the area was the French equivalent of Lancashire. He thought that there was developing in this textile centre a trade-union movement similar to that among Manchester mill-operatives. Equating the French association with the English union, he believed that both showed the workers the economic power they could exert by combination, and that they also inculcated class-consciousness. The Lyon workers in their association, he asserted, exchanged opinions "not only on their immediate needs as workers, but on their needs as human beings". They were "mass-minded", aware of the value of co-operation and the power of property and capital, and determined to develop the labour movement as the one practical means of abolishing the exploitation of wage-labour. He claimed they had worked out for themselves a "mass-type", bread-and-butter-oriented socialism, to which he gave his

54. Ibid, MEGA I, 3, p. 378; MECW, 4, p. 200.

whole-hearted approval. Theoretically, no doubt, it was rather primitive (like Chartism in England), but the level of popular culture was amazingly high and, moreover, the French workers, like their English counterparts, exhibited great moral energy and a passion for knowledge.⁵⁵

He was thus most optimistic about the future of French socialism. It had, he believed, a growing mass base in Paris and in the industrial centres, and the intellectual quality of the best French theorists was unsurpassed. And potentially the power of the masses, when aroused, was very great indeed; enough, he claimed, to reshape the course of French history. But, as in England, there remained, scarcely begun, the major task of raising the level of popular socialist ideology. Marx, however, was confident that this would, in time, be achieved, given the sterling moral qualities and enthusiasm of French labour militants. By the end of 1844 he had concluded that Paris and Lyon were ripe for a concerted campaign of education and organisation among the working-class, if only suitable men could be found to undertake it.⁵⁶ In the meantime, he believed, it was important to perfect socialist theory, and that meant, in particular, going beyond Proudhon's Qu'est-ce que la propriété?, Pecqueur's Théorie nouvelle, and Engels' "Outlines" to develop a socialist science of political economy. This was the most immediate help that

55. Ibid., MEGA I, 3, pp. 223, 256 & 311; MECW, 4, pp. 52-53, 84 & 135.

56. Ibid.

he, a middle-class German intellectual, could give to the French labour movement, he reasoned. So when the manuscript of The Holy Family was complete he resumed his study of economics.

When he had written the first draft (which he now thought unsatisfactory) of his planned book on political economy, Marx, although he was familiar with the writings of several Ricardians, had hardly assimilated Ricardo himself. He now resumed taking copious notes from the French translation, annotated by J-B. Say, of Ricardo's main work, The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation.⁵⁷ He also renewed his study of Buret's De la misère; previously he had been interested primarily in the author's views on economic and social theory, but now he went carefully through his detailed accounts of life in the manufacturing regions of France and England. While Proudhon remained in Paris he and Marx kept up their discussions, and the Frenchman revealed to the young German his intention of writing the Système des contradictions économiques, rashly asking him to write a critical review of the book when it appeared. Marx corresponded occasionally with Engels (now back in the Wuppertal), with Hess in Cologne, and with another new friend, the poet Heine, but apart from doing minor editorial work on Vorwärts! and attending meetings of Paris artisans, he did little but study

57. Marx, "Exzerptheft aus Paris", MEGA I, 3, pp. 493-519. The edition used by Marx was David Ricardo, Des principes de l'économie politique et de l'impôt, avec des notes par J-B. Say, 2 vols, Paris, Aillaud, 1835 (first edition, 1819).

economics and history, and explore Paris.

This idyll came to an end abruptly in February 1845, just when he felt he was making progress again on his book on economics and had signed a publishing contract for it. The French government, bowing to Prussian diplomatic pressure to suppress Vorwärts! and expel its staff, forced Marx to choose between living incommunicado in a remote village or fleeing to Belgium. After toying with the idea of emigrating to North America, the land of republican democracy, the Marx family opted for Brussels, and, with funds beginning to run low, settled there with a few other radical German émigrés.⁵⁸ Still hoping to make a career in journalism, Marx kept in touch with the few left-wing German publishers who planned to bring out socialist books, year-books and reviews in the near future. He undertook to furnish a couple of them with book-reviews criticising currently fashionable works by Friedrich List and Max Stirner. But in Brussels, as in Paris, he spent most of his time during the winter of 1844-45 reading English and French economists. He was just beginning to work out where he stood on questions of economic theory.

Which works did Marx read in these crucial months when his ideas on economics were starting to take form? We have two sources of evidence on his studies in Brussels during the first half of 1845. One is a set of fifteen exercise books, numbered and dated, which he filled with notes between

58. Marx to Leopold I, King of Belgium, 7/2/45; MECW, 4, p. 676.

1845 and 1847 (the "Brussels Notebooks"); the other is a lengthy manuscript article (never published) he wrote in the spring of 1845 attacking Friedrich List's Das nationale System der politischen Oekonomie.⁵⁹ From these we can infer that Marx was compiling information fairly systematically on six topics: the history of economic thought; English liberal (mainly Ricardian) economic theory; alternative (mainly French) systems of political economy; the problem of poverty; the rise of large-scale, mechanised manufacturing industry; and the critiques of capitalism and liberal economics offered by French and English socialists.

In his effort to obtain a historical perspective on the emergence of modern political economy, Marx had recourse partly to original works like Jean-Baptiste Say's Traité d'économie politique (1803) and Henri Storch's Cours d'économie politique (1823), and partly to secondary accounts like Joseph Pecchio's Histoire de l'économie politique en Italie, F. Villegardelle's Histoire des idées sociales avant la révolution française, and Adolphe-Jerome Blanqui's Histoire de l'économie politique. From these he gained a picture of the gradual spread of Smithian political economy on the Continent in the early nineteenth century, the development of the French liberal school headed by Say, and the hostile reactions

59. Marx, "Exzerptheft aus Brüssel, 1845-1847", MEGA I, 6, pp. 597-618. "Draft of an article on Friedrich List's Das nationale System der politischen Oekonomie", MECW, 4, pp. 265-293 (omitted from MEGA).

to liberal economics by latter-day Physiocrats like Garnier, economic nationalists like F.-L.-A. Ferrier, and quasi-socialists like Sismondi. He rapidly concluded that, apart from Say and his disciples like Charles Comte, the most important (because the most rigorous and forthright) post-Smithian liberal economists were the Ricardians. He had previously studied James Mill carefully, and he now added MacCulloch's Discourse on the Origin, Progress and Importance of Political Economy, and Nassau Senior's Fundamental Principles of Political Economy.⁶⁰ Thus, although he was limited to French translations, he was becoming well acquainted with the main works of the older Ricardians, but had yet to peruse the writings of contemporary disciples like John Stuart Mill.

Of all the critics of liberal political economy, Marx judged one writer as standing head and shoulders above the rest: Simonde de Sismondi. He was greatly impressed by the latter's Etudes sur l'économie politique, which he picked

60. "Exzerptheft aus Brüssel, 1845-1847", loc. cit., pp. 597-618. Jean-Baptiste Say, Traité d'économie politique, ou simple exposition de la manière dont se forment, se distribuent et se consomment les richesses, 2 vols, Paris, 1803; Joseph Pecchio, Histoire de l'économie politique en Italie, ou abrégé critique des économistes italiens, Paris, Levavasseur, 1830; F. Villegardelle, Histoire des idées sociales avant la révolution française, ou les socialistes modernes, devancés et dépassés par les anciens penseurs et philosophes, Paris, Guarin, 1846. J.R. MacCulloch, Discours sur l'origine, les progrès, les objets particuliers et l'importance de l'économie politique, Paris, Paschoud, 1825; Nassau W. Senior, Principes fondamentaux de l'économie politique, Paris, Aillaud, 1830; Adolphe-Jerome Blanqui, Histoire de l'économie politique, Brussel, Vahlen, 1843.

up soon after arriving in Brussels.⁶¹ He took 238 excerpts from the two volumes of this work, and also read Sismondi's Italian disciple Antoine Cherbuliez, who had tried to blend his insights with Ricardianism. Since Marx approved of Sismondi's ethical perspective on economics but also admired the deductive rigour of Ricardo's arguments, this eclectic line of approach appealed to him. Possibly he also detected it in Pellegrino Rossi's Cours d'économie politique from which he took 109 extracts. He skimmed the works of a fair number of other more minor economists too, but these he studied less for theory than for information about governmental policies and the evolution of industrial capitalism. Villegardelle's work informed him about the period before and during the French Revolution, especially the ideas of Necker, Brissot and Linguet; F.-L.-A. Ferrier's Du gouvernement considéré dans ses rapports avec le commerce gave him an insight into the reasoning behind Napoleon's economic policies; selections from Moreau de Jonnes in the Journal des économistes gave him an idea of Restoration economic ideology; Jacob Pereire's Leçons sur l'industrie et les finances, suivies d'un projet de banque provided a detailed account of the more technocratic Saint-Simonians' ideas on planning and finance; L.-F.-B. Troien schooled him in the tricks and economic impact of stock-exchange

61. Jean Charles Leonard Simonde de Sismondi, Etudes sur l'économie politique, 2 vols, Bruxelles, Société typographique belge, 1837. Marx, "Exzerptheft aus Brussel, 1845-1847", loc.cit., pp. 614-615; "Draft article on List", loc. cit., pp. 272-273.

speculation; and finally Friedrich List's treatise on 'national economics' elaborated the economic theory behind the protectionism adopted by virtually all European governments in the early nineteenth century.⁶²

Marx pursued his study of urban poverty by reading, in addition to Buret, surveys of French pauperism by C.G. de Chamborant (Du Pauperisme), and Alban de Villeneuve-Bargemont (Economie politique chrétienne, ou recherches sur la nature et les causes du pauperisme). He also studied the effects of machinism on the lower classes, devoting a special exercise-book to the topic of industrialisation, and making notes on, among others, Ure's The Philosophy of Manufactures (he called Ure the "English Pindar of the factory system"), Babbage's Treatise on the Economics of Machines and Manufacturing, and Emile Girardin's Les Machines.⁶³ Finally, he examined

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62. "Exzerpethefte aus Brüssel, 1845-1847", loc. cit., pp. 597-618. Pellegrino Rossi, Cours d'économie politique, Bruxelles, Vahlen, 1843; François-Louis-Auguste Ferrier, Du gouvernement considéré dans ses rapports avec le commerce, Paris, Egron, 1805; Jacob Pereire, Leçons sur l'industrie et les finances, suivies d'un projet de banque, Paris, Bureau du Globe, 1832; Louis-François-Bernard Troien, Essais sur les abus de l'agiotage, les moyens d'y obvier et les principes de bonne foi commerciale, Bruxelles, Tarlier, 1844; Friedrich List, Das nationale System der politischen Oekonomie, Stuttgart, Cotta, 1841.
63. Ibid. C.G. de Chamborant, Du pauperisme, ce qu'il était dans l'antiquité, ce qu'il est de nos jours, Paris, Guillaumin, 1842; Alban de Villeneuve-Bargemont, Economie politique chrétienne, ou recherches sur la nature et les causes du pauperisme, en France et en Europe, et sur les moyens de le soulager et de le prévenir, Bruxelles, Melinc, 1837; Andrew Ure, Philosophie des manufactures, ou économie industrielle de la fabrication du coton, de la laine, du lin et de la soie, avec la description des diverses machines employées dans les ateliers anglais, 2 vols, Bruxelles, Hauman, 1836; Charles Babbage, Traité sur l'économie des machines et des manufactures, London, Knight, 1833; I have been unable to trace the work by Girardin (for which Marx gave no bibliographical information) but I suspect it was an article.
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the writings of some socialist and semi-socialist critics of capitalist industrialisation. Apart from the Sismondians and Saint-Simonians, he was struck by the work of three men: Laborde, Watts, and Bray. From Alexandre de Laborde's De l'esprit d'association, he extracted 68 passages, and the book presumably confirmed his opinion that socialist producers' co-operatives were an economically viable and morally superior alternative to businesses run on capitalist lines. A pamphlet by John Watts, Engels' friend from Manchester, entitled The Facts and Fictions of Political Economists, gave him an idea of the Owenite critique of rent, profit and Malthusian population theory, while John Bray's Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedies introduced him to the views of the so-called Ricardian socialists.⁶⁴ Marx, quite impressed with the insights of these English popular economists and sympathetic to their judgments, was eager to take a look at more of their writings but found it impossible to locate copies in Brussels. He resolved that, as soon as his finances permitted, he would take a trip with Engels to see industrial Britain for himself and to study further Ricardian economics and English socialism. In the meantime, however, he could at least write

64. Ibid. Alexandre de Laborde, De l'esprit d'association dans tous les intérêts de la communauté ou essai sur le complément du bien-être et de la richesse en France par le complément des institutions, Paris, Gyde, 1818; John Watts, The Facts and Fictions of Political Economists: Being a Review of the principles of the science, separating the true from the false, Manchester & London, 1842; John E. Bray, Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy, or the Age of Might and the Age of Right, Leeds, Green, 1839.

an article bringing to the attention of the educated German public the advances which had been made by English, French and Swiss economists. This would serve the dual purpose of pointing the intellectual way forward for continental socialist theory, and of exposing the man who was currently dominating German economic thought, Friedrich List, for the pompous and fraudulent wind-bag Marx considered he was.

Marx never published this article, but most of his first draft is extant in manuscript form.⁶⁵ It was a lengthy polemic designed to convict the self-proclaimed father of 'national economics' of intellectual dishonesty, plagiarism, hypocrisy, and woolly-mindedness. Marx alleged that List's attacks on Say, Sismondi and Ricardo in Das nationale System were miserable failures since List had totally misunderstood Ricardo's theory of ground-rent, had misrepresented Say's career and ideas in order to slander him, and had resorted to vituperative ad hominem slurs on Sismondi. He vigorously defended Sismondi's insights, supported Say's advocacy of free trade against List's protectionism, and succinctly explained Ricardo's ideas on agricultural productivity and rent. He set out to demonstrate in some detail that List had borrowed without acknowledgement most of his main ideas from a customs official of Napoleon, F.-L.-A. Ferrier, who had trenchantly defended the French Empire's blockade of the commerce

65. "Draft article on List", loc. cit., pp. 265-293. First published in Russian translation in Voprosy Istorii K.P.S.S., no. 12, 1971.

of England and her allies. After quoting extensively from Ferrier, he remarked that "the whole of Herr List" was contained "in nuce" in these extracts, the only difference between the two being that Ferrier wrote "in support of an undertaking of world-historical importance -- the Continental System" whereas List was an apologist for "a petty, weak-minded bourgeoisie".⁶⁶

Most of Marx's piece consisted of this kind of destructive polemic. The typical German bourgeois, he charged, was hypocritical -- he lusted for wealth but because of his religious pretensions dared not admit this openly. Hence he needed an ideologist who would disguise his materialist desires under a smokescreen of empty but idealistic-sounding phraseology about 'developing productive forces' and 'the national interest'. This was the role that Friedrich List had filled. Moreover, German industry was backward, and so in consequence was German political economy; List had come on the scene post festum when there was nothing left to add to Say's and Ricardo's incisive analyses. Classical political economy could hardly be further refined, Marx thought; it could now only be dismantled from a socialist perspective, and List was neither interested nor able to do that. Hence the only thing of substance in his book was pleas for tariffs to protect German industry from French competition. Marx assailed this protectionism as hypocritical and selfish on

66. "Draft article on List", loc. cit., pp. 290-297.

the part of German manufacturers who, he claimed, were ardent supporters of the Zollverein; the truth was, he intimated, the German industrialists wanted a monopoly on exploiting central Europe. It was a classic case of wanting to have one's cake and eat it too.⁶⁷

In order to substantiate his attack Marx examined the consequences of high tariff policies. One result of protectionism, he pointed out, was high grain prices, which benefited the large farmer but raised the production costs of manufacturers forced to pay higher subsistence wages. The debate over free trade thus directly reflected a major conflict of interests between the landed aristocracy and the industrial bourgeoisie, and the Ricardians had correctly pointed out that the English Corn Laws had had the effect of lining the pockets of the land-owners at the expense of "crippling the productive force of the country". Hence if industrialisation was to go ahead rapidly in Germany it would be necessary, as in England, to sacrifice the landlords' profits to "the general good" by free trade in grain, by shifting taxes onto land, or even by "outright appropriation of land-rent, i.e. of private property by the state". List, remarked Marx ironically, did not dare reveal this consequence of industrialisation to the German landed aristocracy, so instead he berated Ricardo who had "disclosed such unpleasant truths".⁶⁸

67. Ibid, pp. 265-281.

68. Ibid, p. 287.

In this article Marx was thus a good deal more sympathetic to the Ricardians than he had ever been before. Far from vehemently denouncing Ricardian "cynicism" as he had six months before, he now called it "frank" and "scientific", preferring this honest free-trade liberalism to List's dishonest maunderings. Even if one disagreed with its assumptions and priorities, Ricardian political economy had at least explained accurately the laws and mechanisms of the capitalist economy.⁶⁹ The English and French disciples of Smith, he added, had "cynically betrayed the secret of 'wealth', and had made impossible all illusions about its nature, tendency and movement", while Sismondi had gone even further and predicted the social consequences of this vast system of exploitation, namely "the red cock on the gables of (the new) factories". Moreover, he continued, Sismondi and Cherbuliez had wisely focussed their economic theories on a striking fact which List had apparently failed even to perceive -- the growing disproportion between the productive power and income of the nation as a whole and the amount of wealth retained by the mass of producers.⁷⁰

Marx, then, was toying with the possibility of combining the best insights of Ricardo and Sismondi. He was struck with the discrepancy between the potential of industry and its actual achievements so far: machinism seemed to be destroying

69. Ibid, pp. 266-267.

70. Ibid, pp. 273 & 281.

men instead of enhancing their lives as it should. He was now sure that his new, socialist political economy would follow the Italian school in exposing the horrors of the present industrial epoch but, unlike the work of most previous socialists, would also demonstrate how technology could be used to create a better society freed from the spectres of starvation and slavery. Communism, he mused, would have to reorganise society not only more humanely but also more efficiently, and hence it would have to make maximum use of mechanised industry. Optimistically, and rather naively, he assumed that socialist factories would avoid the forms of alienation prevalent under capitalism. "Industry", he wrote, "can be regarded as a great workshop in which man first takes possession of his forces and the forces of nature, objectifies himself, and creates for himself the conditions for a human existence".⁷¹

The Saint-Simonians, Marx pointed out, had been the first to call on the people to "emancipate their industry from huckstering". They had correctly viewed capitalism as merely a transitional phase to a more efficient mode of organisation of industrial society, and they had attacked 'exchange-value' and private property as key features of an outdated economic order. Further, they had had the great merit of proclaiming the principle of 'association' to replace that of competition, thus placing their projected new society on a

71. Ibid, p. 281.

superior moral basis as well as organising production and distribution more efficiently. Regretfully, however, they had made an important error -- one repeated by List -- in ostentatiously admiring the productive power of present-day factories instead of emphasising the creative potential of non-capitalist industry. As a result Saint-Simonians like Pereire, Chevalier and Dunoyer had slipped into glorifying the bourgeoisie, even (as Marx put it) falling into "the illusion of seeing the dirty bourgeois as a priest". This regression, he asserted, had put an end to the Saint-Simonian school as a useful part of the French socialist movement. In effect the remaining Saint-Simonian publicists had sold out to the bourgeois press, and although some of them still retained "the old phrases", they now endowed them with "the content of the present-day bourgeois regime". Some, like Duveyrier, had even set up business enterprises and were practising "huckstering" on a large scale.⁷²

From the sad case of the Saint-Simonians Marx drew the lesson that there was no half-way house between capitalist organisation of industry (which, he asserted, was really "disorganisation") and a socialist system based on public ownership and planning. Many individual factory owners were humane men with the best of intentions, he recognised, but the bourgeois qua entrepreneur, whatever his personal morality and philanthropic ideals, was not permitted by the competitive situation in which he operated to look on his workers

72. Ibid, pp. 282-283.

as other than costs of production. The capitalist system, by its very nature, deprived him of concern for his workers' personal self-development. No doubt a minority of humanitarian manufacturers would try to provide their 'hands' with safer and healthier working conditions, shorter hours, and the rudiments of education, but the need to keep their prices competitive constrained what they could do. And even if legislation made such reforms universal, Marx concluded, the life of the average worker would still be very far from what it should be. In short, under industrial capitalism there was little chance of the worker ever "developing all his abilities, exercising his productive capacities, fulfilling himself as a human being, and thereby at the same time fulfilling his human nature".⁷³

This article on List not only indicated Marx's renewed interest in the Saint-Simonians, it revealed that he had begun to assimilate the ideas of the neo-Ricardian socialists. His attack on rent as a form of gratuitous exploitation echoed John Bray's Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy, but more generally -- and more importantly -- his stress on factory industry as opposed to commerce reflected the influence of English socialist literature as well as the books by Ure, Babbage and Girardin and the arguments of Engels. This marked a significant change in the focus of Marx's socialism. He was now moving away from the 'pre-industrial' vision of the

73. Ibid, pp. 284-285.

Parisian artisans and their spokesmen like Blanc, Leroux and Proudhon, towards a new preoccupation with the social consequences of steam-powered machinery.

Marx reflected that since under industrial capitalism the ordinary worker was reduced to a "production force", his situation was much the same whether his factory was in Lille, Cologne or Manchester. As modern industry spread throughout Europe, then, national boundaries would cease to have much meaning, the proletarian would feel oppressed more by international capital than by national governments, and the chief social reality would be that of class. In such circumstances, he expected, there would develop a spirit of working-class internationalism opposed to bourgeois nationalism. If List's apologetic 'national economics' had helped provide the German bourgeoisie with a suitable ideology, then the new 'social economics' he, Marx, was writing could explain the material justification for mutual aid among the labour movements of different countries.⁷⁴ Here, perhaps, was the germ of his future commitment to the International Workingmen's Association, a commitment which was to bring him back into contact with French socialists in the 1860s after he had lost contact with the French labour movement for a decade. Here, too, was an early indication of what was to become his most cherished goal in the 1860s: to provide the European labour movement with a systematic text-book which would, from a

74. Ibid, pp. 280-281, 284-286, & 288-291.

socialist point-of-view, elucidate the economic forces against which it was struggling.

However, his idea of proletarian internationalism was only embryonic in this draft article on List, and it was to be some while before he developed it further. He had other problems on his mind. Although he spent most of his time during the early months of 1845 studying economics, he kept up his reading on recent European history, and it was probably now that he first dipped into the works of Guizot and Thierry. He also continued to rethink his ideas on certain 'classic' issues in philosophy, such as the nature of knowledge and truth and the free-will/determinism problem. He had been led to reconsider his philosophical views by his new-found sympathy for the 'materialism' of the more radical philosophes and by his discovery that the great empiricist philosophers, (Bacon, Hobbes, Locke), and their disciples, were by no means as stupid as the German Idealists, whom he had read and listened to at Bonn and Berlin, had made him believe. Not that he had actually embraced empiricism as his own philosophical stance in The Holy Family. In fact, while indicating his general sympathy for post-Lockean materialism he had explicitly reserved judgment on its adequacy and validity. Now, in some scribbled notes penned in the spring of 1845 and known as the Theses on Feuerbach, he worked out where he stood on these questions.⁷⁵

75. "Thesen über Feuerbach", MEGA I, 5, pp. 533-535; MECW, 5, pp. 3-5. See Nathan Rotenstreich, Basic Problems of Marx's Philosophy, N.Y., Bobbs-Merrill, 1965, for an extended explication du texte.

The Theses make it clear that he was searching for a media via between neo-Kantian Idealism and the Lockean empiricism of the philosophes; an approach which would deny neither the reality of the external world nor the active role of the human subject in perceiving, comprehending and modifying this reality. He tried, therefore, to fuse the best insights of both traditions and to proceed a step beyond them. From this position of compromise he tackled four philosophical themes: the theories of knowledge and truth, the problem of determinism, the issue of the social determinants of thought, and the nature of human nature.

Marx was dissatisfied with the traditional empiricist theory of knowledge, which he believed Feuerbach had adopted from the French Enlightenment, because it failed to recognise the role of the creative mind in perceiving and comprehending the world of 'facts' and 'things'. The merit of Kantian and post-Kantian Idealism, he remarked, was that it did focus (in fact, too exclusively) on this "active side" of the cognitive process, whereas the Lockean picture of the mind as a passive tabula rasa simply ignored the part played by mental categories, the structure of the mind, and its existing fund of conceptualised information. Feuerbach was correct, he suggested, to leave behind the abstract speculative metaphysics of traditional German academic philosophy and to concentrate on the individual's assimilation of experience through perception, but he unfortunately followed Locke and the philosophes in assuming the mind to be a purely

contemplative faculty. He thus failed to conceive the joint process of perception and cognition as a practical activity undertaken by human beings in a given socio-economic and historical context. He had, in a word, done nothing to develop the empiricist tradition beyond Locke and his French disciples.⁷⁶

Marx thus accepted the Kantian insight that, because of the part played by the conceptualising and categorising mind in perception, there was always a 'subjective' element in cognition. This, he recognised, raised a problem about the 'objectivity' of empirical knowledge, because it implied that, ostensibly at least, it was impossible to weed out a residue of personal opinion from every factual statement. His answer to this difficulty was to suggest that a given piece of knowledge was 'objective' (or 'scientific') when human beings agreed, as a result of their practical experience, that it was indeed the case. He did not work out this theory of truth carefully or in any detail, but there appear to have been two main ideas behind his remarks. One was an appeal to a verification principle -- like many nineteenth- and twentieth-century positivists he assumed that it ought to be possible, in principle at least, to work out a practical test for the validity of each supposedly factual proposition. But by emphasising so strongly that learning was a practical activity and that practice was the ultimate

76. Ibid.

criterion of truth, Marx came close, in his second 'thesis', to maintaining that an idea was 'objectively' true if, and only if, it 'worked' in everyday life.⁷⁷

The eighth 'thesis' developed this embryonic pragmatism a little further. Here he claimed that the traditional philosophical problems which had puzzled theologians and metaphysicians for centuries were practical social problems in disguise. Looked at from this angle, it was possible, for example, to dissolve the metaphysical problem of free-will into the practical problem of liberty, by arguing that once men were assured of freedom in practice they would cease to worry about theoretical blocks to their free actions. But since in the past material conditions had not been conducive to such practical solutions, he argued, traditional philosophers had been unable to come up with correct theoretical answers either; eventually, however, solutions would be found when social conditions were ripe for their implementation. He also drew the conclusion that men learned best when doing. Indeed, he claimed, purely theoretical or contemplative knowledge was not real knowledge at all -- it was tentative, unproven, and hence imperfect. A really adequate grasp of social phenomena could be obtained only by active involvement in the political and economic issues of the day. Mere 'contemplation' and 'interpretation' of the social world was not enough -- one could understand it properly only by seeking

77. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, p. 534; MECW, 5, p. 3.

to change it. This conviction led him to postulate an ideal of the unity of theory and practice; philosophy, he maintained, should be conceived as not just a method of inquiry but as also a programme to be realised through political action.⁷⁸

These, then, were Marx's considered opinions on 'truth' and 'knowledge'. He also recognised that his modification of Lockean empiricism to include a Kantian 'active mind' entailed a rejection of universal causal determinism. He believed that Feuerbach, again following the philosophes, had espoused the materialist doctrine that men were totally the products of circumstances, upbringing and education. Marx now repudiated this position. The doctrine of environmental and educational determinism, he pointed out succinctly, neglected that "circumstances are changed by men and that the educator must himself be educated", thus failing to account for the creative or developmental element in social change. On the other hand, he recognised, the simple postulate of human free-will ignored the powerful forces which influenced, conditioned, and constrained human conduct. The fact of the matter, he concluded, was that neither traditional voluntarism (as espoused, for example, by Kant) nor the mechanistic causal determinism of philosophes like D'Holbach, was adequate. A new approach was required to the relation between volitions and behaviour. Marx suggested that the free-will/

78. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, p. 535; MECW, 5, p. 5.

determinism dilemma might be surmounted in a manner analogous to his 'transcendence' of Idealist and empiricist epistemology. What was lacking in traditional philosophy, he suggested, was a concept which denoted simultaneously the impact of external forces on the individual and the effect of his own volitions and plans. He offered the notion of 'revolutionary practice'. This, he claimed, provided a way of explaining how men, when altering their environment, implemented their projects and ideals but also responded to external (material and social) forces. Substantial social change occurred, he implied, only when the two things (plans and circumstances) harmonised.⁷⁹

Marx also raised in the Theses the question of ideology. He reasoned that if all thought, including philosophy and theology, was a practical social activity, then one could understand the writings of metaphysical philosophers and theologians not merely as confused efforts at dealing with abstruse subjects, but also, more fruitfully, as documents expressing in concealed form the social problems of the day. In effect he was proposing a sociology of religion and a sociology of knowledge. Feuerbach's critique of religion had suggested this idea to him, and he had already toyed with it in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher essays. Now he attempted again to come to terms with the implications of Feuerbach's critique of religion. In 'thesis' No. 4 he accepted

79. Ibid. MEGA I, 5, p. 534; MECW, 5, p. 4.

the latter's demonstration that religion was an ideological reflection of the secular world and that men had projected onto God the ideal human qualities they despaired of attaining in their daily lives. This explanation of Christianity was true as far as it went, he commented, but one also needed to show how the human desire for religious consolation reflected the antagonistic character of social relations. Feuerbach's perspective on religion was therefore limited because he had neglected the fact that religion was a social product, and that the kind of Christianity which he had exposed as a perverted humanism was really a manifestation of a particular form of society, namely commercial capitalism.

Marx considered it mistaken to suppose, as Feuerbach had done, that there was a single Christian religion which was an alienated expression of human nature. Rather, there had been in the course of history a series of religious ideologies, each expressive of man's successive failures to solve his economic and social problems and create an ideal society on earth. Here, then, Marx was going beyond Feuerbach to suggest a historical sociology of religion not unlike that which Frazer would later attempt in The Golden Bough.⁸⁰

He applied the same line of reasoning to the history of materialist philosophy. The philosophes, he suggested, had developed social thought as far as was possible within a nascent bourgeois society, but their vision had been limited

80. Ibid.

to trying to explain in causal terms the psychological formation of the individuals who made up this society. As pre-Revolutionary thinkers they did not understand how men -- particularly men united in groups with a common purpose -- could transform themselves, their society and their natural environment. Consequently they lacked the notion of 'revolutionary practice', and had failed to elaborate a theory of knowledge which appreciated the role of 'practical activity' in perception and cognition. Nor had they the experience that their nineteenth-century successors possessed of how a society could be transformed when men's idealistic plans and the socio-economic conditions appropriate to them coincided. Marx thus considered that the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution together had made possible the recent transformation of materialist philosophy from the old mechanistic causal determinism to his own pragmatic humanism. The tenth thesis expressed this idea in a bald manner, asserting a causal connection between bourgeois society and traditional materialism on the one hand, and, on the other, socialism and the new humanist 'materialism'. He tried in this way to fit the history of philosophy to major developments in European society, seeing the former as an ideological reflection of the latter.⁸¹

Finally, Marx's reflections on the influence of social change on the history of thought led him to question

81. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, p. 535; MECW, 5, p. 5.

the Enlightenment assumption, shared by Feuerbach, that human nature was, at bottom, eternal and unchanging. Feuerbach's concept of man's 'species-being', he mused, was a way of positing a human 'essence', which, of course, he needed to do for his theory of religion. However, if one regarded Christianity not as a static emotional and doctrinal system but as a flexible cluster of values, theories and beliefs, which had evolved over the centuries, one could still understand it as an 'alienated' ideology without assuming that it was a distorted mirror-image of a fixed 'human nature'. The truth was, Marx argued, that the idea of an 'essential' human nature was an abstraction, and a misleading one at that. In reality there was no human nature as such; rather men's characters were social products, the result of the history of their nation and their own complex social relationships. Feuerbach's social thought, like that of most of the philosophes (Montesquieu excepted), was excessively a-historical, neglecting the variations in human personality according to time and place. In the Theses, therefore, Marx for the first time discarded his belief in a 'natural' human being, a belief which had underlain all his thought up to this time, including the psycho-economic theory of dehumanisation he had presented in the Paris Manuscripts. He had not, as yet, constructed an alternative to replace it, but there was a glimmer in the sixth 'thesis' of his later notion of man as a 'relational being' (i.e., a creature who defined his own nature through the web of relations which he had with other

beings and the natural environment). In so far as one could talk meaningfully about a human 'essence', he commented, this had to be conceived not as an "abstraction inherent in each single individual" but rather as "the ensemble of the social relations". This remark was scarcely crystal-clear, but it was enough to show that Marx was changing his mind on a crucial question. Indeed, this change of opinion was to have far-reaching consequences. It paved the way for a much less a priori and more historical approach to contemporary society.⁸²

In fact Marx never again dealt directly with semi-technical issues in philosophy, so the Theses, brief though they are, provide the best evidence we have for his views. Whether he was to change them again in later life is a complicated and difficult question, bedevilled by lack of adequate evidence. However, his opinions in 1845 are clear enough in their main lines, and the Theses on Feuerbach indicate what he conceived to be the methodological and epistemological foundation of the new theory of history he was to develop, together with Engels, during 1845-46. In his old age Engels was to claim that Marx had in fact already sketched the main lines of the 'materialist theory of history' by the spring of 1845.⁸³ There is no evidence for this in any of Marx's extant writings, but the Theses do at least

82. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, p. 535; MECW, 5, p. 4.

83. Friedrich Engels, "Zur Geschichte des 'Bundes der Kommunisten'", WERKE, 21, p. 212.

suggest that Marx's thought was taking a much more historical turn. The Theses therefore constitute a work of transition between the writings of 1844 and The German Ideology. From the beginning of 1845 Marx was to look at contemporary intellectual events with the eye of a social and economic historian. As a result he became more hostile to socialist theorists -- including Frenchmen like Proudhon, whom he greatly admired -- who seemed to him to lack an adequate sense of history.

CHAPTER 10

GERMAN SOCIALISM, FOURIER AND THE ENGLISH WORKERS, 1845

When he returned to the Rhineland in the late fall of 1844, Engels found that significant changes had taken place during the two years he had been out of the country. The Wuppertal was now experiencing progress and prosperity, and he could detect social consequences of rapid industrialisation, such as increased working-class crime, similar to those in the Manchester region. He judged the Barmen-Elberfeld urban area an excellent place for communist propaganda, and was pleased to discover that several small socialist groups had recently been created there. Visiting Cologne and Düsseldorf, he was highly impressed by the "enormous" amount of socialist educational activity evident there. But more striking than the existence of a few radical societies, was a manifest shift in Rhineland public opinion on the 'social question'. A few years back, he recalled, the problem of lower-class poverty had been ignored by government and press, and educated middle-class opinion had been indifferent, even hostile, to the mere suggestion that it was serious enough to warrant study. But now, at last, the question of social reform was in the air, the German bourgeoisie had rediscovered its social conscience, and German

socialism, benefiting from the publicity, was making up for lost time.¹

This new atmosphere confirmed Engels' resolve to inform his countrymen about the condition of the English workers. The time was clearly ripe, too, for Marx's projected work on socialist political economy. He wrote to Marx, urging him to finish his book quickly and strike while the iron was hot.² He also dispatched three articles to The New Moral World entitled collectively "Rapid Progress of Communism in Germany", describing the new situation in the Rhineland.³

One tangible expression of the new interest in social problems, he explained, was the creation of Associations for the Benefit of the Working Classes. These were societies in which the more liberal manufacturers, merchants, government bureaucrats, professional men, and some better-educated artisans gathered together to discuss the causes of pauperism and practical ways of curing it. Initially the work of a few philanthropists, these organisations had apparently picked up a good deal of support from the business community in the Rhenish manufacturing centres, and Engels saw the movement

1. Engels to Marx, early October 1844, Correspondence Marx-Engels, vol 1, 1835-1848 (eds. Gilbert Badia & Jean Mortier), Paris, Editions sociales, 1971 (hereafter cited as CME, 1), pp. 335-340. Also, Engels to Marx, 19/11/44, CME, 1, pp. 340-348.
2. Engels to Marx, 20/1/45, CME, 1, pp. 352-358.
3. Engels, "Rapid Progress of Communism in Germany", The New Moral World, nos 25, 37 & 46, 13/12/44, 8/3/45 & 10/5/45; reprinted in MEGA I, 4, pp. 339-348; MECW, 4, pp. 229-242.

as analogous to that for factory reform in England. He supported it whole-heartedly, partly as an indication that social relations were becoming more "civilised", partly as a valuable channel through which to spread communist ideas. His strategy of converting the Associations to a more radical perspective apparently met with some success in the winter of 1844-45. Moses Hess and his communist group in Cologne had helped draw up the programme of the Association there, and Engels himself gained a seat on the executive committee of the Elberfeld Association, which (he reported to Marx) had refused to allow itself to be taken over by the local churches. Tolerated by the local police, the Associations thus looked to Engels an excellent vehicle for converting the more receptive elements of the middle classes to socialism.⁴

The German bourgeoisie was, he believed, on the whole more humanitarian and enlightened than its English counterpart, a judgement which no doubt reflected the courteous hearing he had received in the Elberfeld Association. Socialism, he admitted, had yet to put firm roots down among the Rhenish workers, but from young middle-class intellectuals the nucleus of a socialist party had been formed. He hoped these theorists would soon link up with groups of educated workers to form a mass movement, and he was convinced that an alliance with the philanthropic liberals on a programme

4. Ibid, loc. cit., MEGA I, 4, pp. 342-344; MECW, 4, pp. 233-236; Also, Engels to Marx, 19/11/44, CME, 1, pp. 340-348.

of moderate social reform was the only feasible policy for the youthful "party". The most immediate task, he concluded, was to spread communist ideas by public meetings, newspaper articles, journals and books, so he was pleased to see the emergence of a socialist press of sorts in the Rhineland. By the end of 1844, he reported, there were in existence several quasi-socialist newspapers, a quarterly review, the Rheinische Jahrbücher, and a year-book, the Deutsches-Bürgerbuch (both edited by Puttman). Furthermore, the publication of books by a number of socialist authors, including himself and Marx, was imminent.⁵

Like Marx, Engels made contact with the few German publishers willing to sponsor left-wing literature, obtained a contract for The Condition of the Working Classes in England, and began planning articles for Puttman's review and year-book. He also became involved in two other publishing projects dreamed up by Moses Hess: a scholarly review devoted to social and economic problems with a content sufficiently objective and factual to satisfy the Prussian censors (to be called the Gesellschaftsspiegel), and a 'Library of Best Foreign Socialist Writers' (i.e., a multi-volume collection of English and French socialist documents, translated into German, which Hess thought he could persuade a publisher to undertake as a commercial venture). In the event, only the first of these plans materialised, but he

5. Engels, "Rapid Progress", loc. cit., MEGA I, 4, pp. 339-348; MECW, 4, pp. 229-242.

devoted considerable energy to them both during the winter of 1844-45.⁶

He considered that there were three main obstacles hampering the rapid spread of socialism in western Germany. The fairly numerous socialist groups were isolated, and often unaware of each others' existence; they needed an organisational framework to link them together. The socialist press was still weak financially, and its circulation was small. But worse still, there was available to left-wing propagandists no concise, clear statement of communist principles. He was disappointed that Hess and his Cologne group had omitted to produce such a manifesto, and wrote to Marx that until there existed a "historical and logical exposé" showing socialism to be the culmination of European thought and German history, little would be achieved. The present agitation, he added, was hesitant and exploratory, a case of the blind leading the blind.⁷

Engels was thus most dissatisfied with the state of German socialist theory which he thought had lagged far behind France and England. To start with, he pointed out, there was a hopeless confusion over terminology. The word 'socialism' was used in a looser, vaguer sense than in England and France to denote the views of anyone and everyone who felt that something had to be done about the social

6. Engels to Marx, 20/1/45 and 22-26/2/ & 7/3/45, CME, 1, pp. 352-370.

7. Engels to Marx, 19/11/44, 20/1/45 and 22-26/2/ & 7/3/45, CME, 1, pp. 340-348 & 352-370.

question. Those socialists who were clear-sighted enough to perceive that the root of the evil lay in private property, the commercial spirit, and wage-labour would therefore do well (he considered) to adopt the label 'communist'. In his own usage 'communist' still applied to any doctrine which advocated a communitarian solution to the social problem, irrespective of the means proposed to arrive at it. But a real division, he believed, lay between those who accepted that society would ultimately have to be rebuilt on different principles and those who balked at this home truth, and this was an important source of confusion within the nascent German socialist movement. There was a second, which irritated him almost as much. Very few German socialists, he concluded with some justification, knew anything much about industrialisation and its effects on the working class, nor had they grasped the first principles of political economy. In consequence their socialism, even when they accepted the need to abolish private property and profit-making, was a nebulous, sentimental, humanitarian idealism. He had no quarrel with their values, which he shared, or their vision, which he also shared, but he was appalled by their ignorance of French and English thinkers. Only a very small minority of German communists, he decided, were operating intellectually at the same level as the leaders of the French and English movements; indeed, their names could be counted on the fingers of one hand: Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, Moses Hess, and perhaps George Herwegh. Before it could effectively

educate the bourgeoisie and the workers, therefore, the German socialist movement would have itself to be educated. Hence the need for the Gesellschaftsspiegel, Marx's book on political economy, his own on the English workers, and the 'Library of Foreign Socialist Writers'.⁸

During his visits to Cologne and Düsseldorf, Engels had noticed that his socialist friends there seemed particularly woolly on the question of how communism could be put into practice in the immediate future. This ignorance, he thought, could quickly be dispersed by an article surveying communist communities in England and America. So he dashed off for the Deutsches-Bürgerbuch a "Description of Recently Founded Communist Communities still in Existence".⁹ In this piece he claimed quite bluntly that "communism, social existence, and activity based on community of goods, is not only possible, but has actually already been realised in many communities in America and in one place in England, with the greatest success". In proof of this assertion he described a series of American religious communities -- the Shaker town of Pleasant Hill in Kentucky; the Rappite settlement of Economy in Ohio; the Lutheran Separatist colony at Zoar, Ohio; and among others, the Unitarian settlements at Brook Farm and Northampton, Massachusetts -- and also some set up by

8. Ibid. Also, Engels to Marx, early October 1844, CME, 1, pp. 335-340.

9. Engels, "Beschreibung der in neuerer Zeit entstandenen und noch bestehenden kommunistischen Ansiedlungen", Deutsches Bürgerbuch für 1845 (ed. H. Puttmann), Darmstadt, Leske, 1845, pp. 326-340; reprinted in MEGA I, 4, pp. 349-366; MECW, 4, pp. 214-228.

English socialist immigrants, such as that founded by Collins in New York State and that at Equality in Wisconsin by Thomas Hunt. These, he claimed, were but a few examples of prosperous and growing communities in the New World which had proved that communal living was not only possible but highly efficient. He then analysed in detail Robert Owen's colony at Harmony in Hampshire, England, which was currently still in operation. Brushing aside Harmony's problems, he concluded that this experiment, like its American precursors, demonstrated that men and women organized communally could live better with less work, and have more leisure to develop their minds, than their neighbours living individualistically under capitalism. Moreover, not only were they more prosperous materially, they were "better, more moral people" than those who possessed private property. Communal solidarity, in a word, was both ethical and efficient.¹⁰

At the end of 1844, then, Engels was an enthusiastic 'utopian'. There is no question but that he believed in the viability of self-sufficient, communal agrarian settlements as a practical alternative to a commercial rural economy. Furthermore, he was convinced that the solution could be adapted to industry, even to the mechanised factory-industry of the Lancashire cotton towns. Robert Owen, he thought, had shown that this was the case, not only by running the New Lanark mills in a humanitarian fashion and creating a

10. Ibid.

happy community of workers there, but also by his projects for new towns planned around communal kitchens, heating systems and recreational areas. Indeed, he argued, the segment of the population who most needed and who would most benefit from the expansion of "practical communism" from the country to the towns was the "poor workers who own nothing". To these workers communism offered the only hope for an independent, secure, anxiety-free existence, and a life-style based on equality instead of slavery. Engels thus revealed himself to be still very much an Owenite in his loyalty to Harmony, his admiration for Owen's own achievements and projects, and, above all, his conviction that the organisational principles of a successful rural community could be applied to an urban, industrial environment. He was sure that, in industrial Europe as in rural America, a communal life would bring abundance and fraternity.¹¹

Idealistic though he was, Engels thought of his own approach to the 'social question' as eminently practical. He was tired of abstract philosophising, he wrote to Marx, and eager to immerse himself in detailed, empirical studies of the German economy and social life. The German socialist movement should discard for good the remnants of Hegelian metaphysics which still cluttered the pages of the left-wing press.¹² In this state of mind, he plunged with relief into writing The Condition of the Working Class in England, and

11. Ibid.

12. Engels to Marx, 19/11/44, CME, 1, pp. 346-347.

took up with enthusiasm Hess' suggestion that he draft a programmatic statement of aims for the forthcoming Gesellschaftsspiegel which was due to begin publication the next spring. It was published as the editorial introduction to the first issue, and revealed Engels' views on the type of literature required by the Rhenish socialist movement.¹³ The first task, he suggested, was to research carefully the problem of lower class poverty, collecting data on the size of the workforce, its standard of living, the extent of pauperism, crime and prostitution, and the state of health and education. Accurate and detailed regional studies would be particularly helpful, as would non-partisan inquiries into the changes occurring in different trades, since the periodical's ultimate goal was to build up a panoramic picture of the evolution of German society under the impact of commercialisation, urbanisation, and industrialisation.¹⁴ He suggested four lines of investigation might be especially profitable: the quality of life in large urban centres, conditions of work in mechanised factories, the fate of small businessmen and master craftsmen, and efforts to remedy abuses and prevent social disorders.

13. anon (Engels, in collaboration with Moses Hess), "To the Readers of and Contributors to the Gesellschaftsspiegel", Gesellschaftsspiegel, vol 1, January 1845; translation in MECW, 4, pp. 671-674 (apparently omitted from MEGA and WERKE).

14. Ibid.

While he wanted to keep the tone of the journal sober and scholarly, Engels envisaged it as a practical vehicle of social reform. He hoped it would promptly and regularly expose cases of excessive working-hours, avoidable industrial accidents, brutality by managers and over-seers, exploitation through the truck system, and the hardships endured by workers made redundant through illness, old-age or trade fluctuations. He remarked that there did exist, on paper, a few laws designed to protect the poor from the rich, but these had been little used because there was no mechanism whereby violations could be brought to the notice of the courts. The Gesellschaftsspiegel could at least bring the glare of publicity to some "acts of injustice".¹⁵ Clearly, he expected that in Germany, as in England, working conditions could be ameliorated by restricting child and female labour, improving safety conditions, and stamping out by well-enforced legislation the worst abuses inflicted by manufacturers on their work-forces (he was particularly incensed by compulsory night-work, and by the practice of making employees clean their machines in their own time). But he also believed that the problem of employee-exploitation was only soluble in part under a capitalist economic regime. The constraints of competitiveness and profitability, he recognised, drove manufacturers to impose long hours, poor working conditions, and low wages on their 'hands'; the relationship

15. Ibid.

of boss to wage-earner was inherently authoritarian; and, most important of all, no individual businessman felt responsible for the deleterious consequences of machinism, trade cycles, and declining wage rates. The journal would therefore try to bring home to the German nation its collective responsibility for the misery in its midst.¹⁶

Sensing potential readers in the business community, Engels stressed the need to expose the damage being done to the Mittelstand by uncontrolled industrialisation. He predicted three economic results of unrestrained competition: the concentration of capital in the hands of an élite of big-businessmen, the growth of monopolies, and the decline of small-scale artisan manufacturing.¹⁷ The review would sponsor studies to verify these trends, and it would also report on all attempts at social reform, such as the work of the new Associations and government legislation. He regretted that the Prussian state had so far concentrated on coercive measures which, while holding some evils in check, produced others equally regrettable. He had nothing but contempt for the barbaric character of the Prussian penal code, and vigorously denounced the vicious and short-sighted sentencing policies of the judiciary, who placed minor offenders in solitary confinement or among hardened criminals, and punished poachers with death. He classified the poor law system,

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., p. 673.

as currently operated, under the penal code, but admitted that information was lacking on how it functioned in practice in different parts of the country. Indeed, Engels, comparing Prussia to England, was acutely sensitive to the absence of adequate data on crime, prostitution, poverty, public health, housing conditions and wage-rates; he appealed especially to "priests, teachers, doctors and officials" to provide the Gesellschaftsspiegel with these facts.¹⁸

Before this statement saw the light of day Engels had left the Wuppertal, so he never worked on the editorial board of the journal. The other project he shared with Hess during the opening months of 1845, the 'Library of Best Foreign Socialist Writers', was abortive, although Engels did translate one piece for it, a manuscript of Fourier's on commerce, which he subsequently transformed into an article for the Deutsches Bürgerbuch.¹⁹ However, when the scheme was first mooted he threw himself energetically into planning the volumes and looking for suitable translators. He used Marx, recently moved to Brussels, as a source of French-language texts, and solicited his opinion on which French authors should be included. Marx, too, was excited by the venture, and quickly sent Engels his ideas on how to organise

18. Ibid, p. 674.

19. Engels, "Ein Fragment Fouriers über den Handel", Deutsches Bürgerbuch für 1846 (ed. H. Puttmann), Pannheim, Hoff, 1846, pp. 1-56; reprinted in MEGA I, 4, pp. 407-453; MECW, 4, pp. 613-644.

the 'Library' and which theorists should be represented in it. His views reveal the comparative breadth by this time of his knowledge of early French socialism.

Marx suggested that the series should be organised historically, and should take the form of a documentary history of European socialism. This would illustrate the way that socialist theory had developed under the influence of the French Revolution and industrialisation, and would bring out the parallels between English and French theorists, including their common debt to the materialism of the French Enlightenment. He had recently discovered the works of Morelly and Godwin, and now insisted on their importance. The place to begin the series, he contended, was with Enlightenment 'proto-socialists' like Helvetius and D'Holbach; then one could illustrate their impact on English radical thought with a judicious selection from Bentham, Godwin's Political Justice, and the major works of Robert Owen.²⁰

Marx considered, however, that the history of French socialism warranted a more detailed and thorough treatment. The first French socialist theorists, properly speaking, he told Engels, were Morelly and Mably, so their writings should be well represented. Then the 'Library' should include selections from the extreme left of the French Revolution: the Cercle social, Hébert, Jacques Roux and Leclerc, perhaps

20. Marx, "Notizbuch aus den Jahren 1844-47", MEGA I, 5, p. 549; "Plan of the Library of the Best Foreign Socialist Writers", MECW, 4, p. 667; Engels to Marx, 17/3/45, replying to a non-extant letter from Marx on the subject, CME, 1, pp. 364-370.

to be followed by Babeuf and Buonarroti. After this, pride of place should be given to the seminal figures of Fourier and Saint-Simon. The only Fourierist of major importance who had to be included, he judged, was Considerant, but it was imperative to provide selections from Le Producteur and Le Globe as well as the best productions of the Saint-Simonian school like Bazard's Exposition and Leroux's essays. French communism ought to be illustrated too, by Cabet's Voyage and the writings of Dézamy and Gay; and an attempt should be made to portray working-class ideology, probably by means of extracts from L'Égalitaire and L'Humanitaire. The series should culminate, he suggested, with Proudhon's Qu'est-ce que la propriété? and his forthcoming book on economics if it were available in time, because Proudhon's writings were the apotheosis of French socialist thought, and indeed the most advanced work yet achieved by the European left. He offered to write an extended introductory essay to the 'Library' explaining the evolution of the different currents of European socialism from the mid-eighteenth century to the present.²¹

Engels, a little astonished at the degree of Marx's enthusiasm and the length of his list of essential thinkers, replied conciliatorily, suggesting that they might compose the introduction together, with Marx doing the French section and himself the English. It would have to be brief, he

21. Ibid.

remarked, but there was no reason why it should not sketch the main outlines of the history of European socialist thought. But he was dead against organising the whole 'Library' chronologically. For one thing, he argued, the publisher required an alternation of French and English material, which would upset the historical development; for another, to fill up all the early volumes with out-dated sources would be boring for the reader and jeopardise the commercial viability of the project. In any case, it was vital to begin with works that would shock German public opinion into action on the 'social question', and the 'Library' should be restricted for the most part to texts with a "positive content" useful for propaganda purposes. In his opinion, the bulk of the volumes should consist of works by Fourier, Owen and the Saint-Simonians, although no doubt a place might be found for Morelly later in the series. As for Godwin, he and Hess proposed to leave out Political Justice. He admitted that it contained "numerous excellent passages" in which Godwin came close to communism, and that it had some value as a critique of establishment politics, but, he claimed, Godwin's conclusions were in general resolutely anti-socialist. Anticipating that Marx would rise to this bait, he added hastily that it had been some time since he had read the book, and he would look it over again. But in any case, if one included Godwin one could hardly omit Bentham, whose writings were incredibly tedious and abstract. Engels, in other words, conceived the 'Library' not as a scholarly

enterprise but as a way of quickly making available the best pieces of French and English socialist propaganda to German agitators. He was much more conscious than Marx of the need to produce short, clear, non-academic exposés of communist ideas for the militants of the grass-roots movement he believed was beginning to emerge in the Rhineland.²²

The one piece which Engels actually chose and translated for the 'Library' before the scheme caved in was a good example of the kind of educational material he had in mind. No German socialist except Weitling, he wrote in his introduction to "A Fragment of Fourier's on Trade", had so far produced anything comparable to Fourier's critique of commerce. Fourier was not a communist, and there were some bizarre things in his very uneven writings, but he had criticised existing social relations so sharply and with so much wit and humour that one could readily forgive him his cosmological fantasies about anti-lions and lemonade seas. "French nonsense", Engels remarked, "is at least cheerful, whereas German nonsense is gloomy and profound", and he made it abundantly clear that he had little time for most of what had been passed off as German socialist theory in the last few years. What Owen, Fourier, Saint-Simon and others had said as long as "ten, twenty or even forty years ago -- and said very well, very clearly, in very fine language", German philosophers were now at last becoming acquainted with, and

22. Engels to Marx, 17/3/45, CME, 1, pp. 364-370.

reproducing in abstract, Hegelianised jargon. The only thing that was original about German socialism, he added, was the "bad, abstract, unintelligible and clumsy form" in which the commonplaces of Western European socialist theory were expressed. In fact, the Germans still knew very little about Owenism, and they had taken from the French only "the most general principles...the schematic plans of future societies, the social systems", ignoring the best aspect of the Fourierists', Saint-Simonians' and Proudhon's writings, namely their investigation of social problems and their criticism of existing society. Fourier's essay, then, would serve as an illustration of what could be done, and might encourage some left-wing German intellectuals to go beyond Lorenz von Stein's inadequate book on French socialism (Der Socialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs) and read the Théorie des quatre mouvements for themselves.²³

Lack of space prevented Engels from reproducing in the Bürgerbuch the whole Fourier manuscript published posthumously in La Phalange. He chose a generalised attack on the mercantile spirit, free trade and liberal economics, and a systematic analysis of thirty-six different forms of bankruptcy (most of which the Frenchman exposed as fraudulent). This disquisition on bankruptcy, though amusing, and characteristic of Fourier's sceptical dissection of French economic

23. Engels, "Ein Fragment Fouriers", loc. cit., MEGA 1, 4, pp. 409-411; MECW, 4, pp. 613-615.

life, was tangential to Engels' purpose. What he really admired was Fourier's scathing denunciation of commercial capitalism.

In Engels' selection Fourier began by attacking the mercantile spirit as the chief source the "debasement" and "disorganisation" of French society. Commerce, he claimed, had subordinated the French nation to the power of an unproductive merchant class, and free trade had caused bankruptcies, monopolies, "villainy" in business relations, and "veritable industrial anarchy".²⁴ He excoriated commerce as fundamentally immoral, an opinion with which his translator warmly agreed, remembering vividly his own disgust with the countless minor deceits and sharp-practices he had witnessed in Bremen and Manchester. Engels followed this general critique with a *précis*, mainly in Fourier's words, of the historical development of modern commercial capitalism. Explaining that different types of society had different forms of commerce, he reproduced Fourier's description of four stages in the history of trade: barter; 'indirect commerce' (i.e., primitive trade carried out through the medium of honest middlemen); 'compound commerce' (characterised by speculation and hoarding by parasitic middlemen); and 'civilised trade', which amalgamated all the vices of earlier stages and amounted to legalised robbery.²⁵ Fourier, who had

24. *Ibid*, *loc. cit.*, MEGA I, 4, p. 412; MECW, 4, p. 616.

25. *Ibid*, MEGA I, 4, p. 413; MECW, 4, p. 617.

a mania for arranging and cataloguing things, had claimed that there were thirty-six iniquitous features of 'civilised trade', such as the arbitrary determination by the merchant of the value of commodities, deceit over the quantity and quality of goods supplied, cornering of supplies and markets, speculation, and usury. Engels reproduced these in tabular form, and added several paragraphs of Fourier's text explaining and commenting on them.²⁶ In particular, the French socialist objected to the social irresponsibility of merchants, who, he claimed, were quite prepared to ruin manufacturers by price-cutting during gluts and to gouge the public unmercifully when there was a commodity famine. He also asserted that merchants, by issuing commercial bills, had foisted on the country a fraudulent monetary system, and had obtained a privileged financial position which many exploited dishonestly.²⁷

Engels endorsed all this, and he admired, too, Fourier's attempt to demonstrate that cyclical trade crises had their roots in the anarchy of free trade. Middlemen, the French socialist argued, disrupted normal trade by creating artificial shortages or gluts from which they could extract extra profits. They also exacerbated famines and overproduction crises, even though they possessed the power to mitigate them by manipulating their stockpiles of goods.

26. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 415; MECW, 4, p. 618.

27. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 418-421; MECW, 4, pp. 620-622.

He contended that whereas it was perfectly feasible to use the distribution system to smoothe out irregularities in production, in practice the anarchic market usually made production crises worse, and because of this the whole economy was a disorderly mess. The net result of free-trade, he concluded, was that "the commercial movement proceeds by fits and starts, in spasms, surprises and excesses of all descriptions, as can be seen every day in the present trade mechanism, which can achieve only a periodically interrupted circulation, without regular gradation, without balance and guarantees".²⁸ This explanation of cyclical economic crises was one that we have seen Engels defending earlier, and there seems no question that he preferred a 'disequilibrium' theory to the underconsumptionist account offered elsewhere by Fourier and popularised by Considerant and Proudhon.

Another point which Fourier made forcefully in the "Fragment", and which Engels strongly agreed with, was that the modern commercial system had become so firmly established, despite its evident immorality and fraudulence, at least in part because intellectuals had written apologies for it and governments had acquiesced in it. The liberal intelligentsia had developed a "new science called Economics" which appeared to have the sole purpose of exalting "hucksters, stock-jobbers, corner-men, usurers, bankrupts, monopolisers and commercial parasites to the peak of honours", while governments, falling

28. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 423; MECW, 4, p. 623.

deeper and deeper into debt, had abandoned their scruples and pandered to the "mercantile bloodsuckers" who could, at a high price, provide them with the credit they desperately needed. But this armistice between the state and the élite of merchant capitalists, Fourier feared, was rapidly turning into a quiet capitulation by the former in the face of the latter's demands.²⁹ Engels thus found in Fourier the suggestion that governments were rapidly losing their power to check the anti-social policies of interest groups and classes, and were becoming instead the pawns of a new rising social group, the merchant capitalists.

Fourier's entire critique was aimed at commercial, not industrial, capitalism. Engels was well aware of this, and it was of course one of the main reasons why he felt that Fourier's analysis, brilliant though it was, had to be superseded. But Germany was as yet relatively unindustrialised outside a few localities, so as a complement to Engels' own focus on factory industry it was useful to have available socialist literature which would appeal directly to the artisan and peasant. Even if the condition of the proletariat was "the main point" of communist propaganda, he remarked, this came nowhere near exhausting "the criticism of present-day society". Except in his last manuscripts, Fourier had hardly touched on factory labour at all, which in Engels' view merely went to prove that bourgeois society

29. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 423; MECW, 4, p. 619.

was thoroughly reprehensible even before the industrial revolution. He judged Fourier as unrivalled as a critic of the "inner" social relationships among the French bourgeoisie, and rejoiced in his scathing exposé of the dullness and hypocrisy of middle-class life. The Frenchman's critique of capitalist culture was unique, he emphasised, and German socialism had a great deal to learn from him on this subject as well as on economic matters.³⁰

Engels also approved of Fourier's methodology, writing gleefully that he hated philosophy and "savagely ridiculed it" in his writings. Sure enough, he frequently indulged in wild speculations, but these were genial eccentricities which in no way detracted from his empirical analyses of past and present. His epochs of social development (savagery, patriarchy, barbarism, civilisation) compared favourably with the laborious ascent of Hegel's 'Absolute Idea' "grunting and groaning" its way through four world empires. Engels insisted that whereas Hegel's historiography imposed a speculative pattern on events, Fourier's categories emerged from the facts of history; moreover, even if he did sometimes slip into absurdities and fantasies, his work was extraordinarily fertile -- a treasure trove of ideas in which more prosaic minds would for a long while find many stimulating insights.³¹

There was therefore no question in Engels' mind that

30. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 451-452; MECW, 4, p. 643.

31. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 450-451; MECW, 4, pp. 641-643.

it would do his German socialist acquaintances in Cologne and Düsseldorf good to immerse themselves for a while in the original writings of Fourier, Owen, and some other French socialist theorists. Germany had to catch up with what had been achieved abroad, and the existing secondary works on the subject were "without exception bad". When all was said and done, French socialist theory was the most advanced in Europe, and any socialist who wanted to be up-to-date would have to master the most important French material. For that matter he would also have to study the emergence of the labour movement in France and England, and that meant grasping "the whole of English and French history during the last eighty years", especially the French Revolution and the course of English industrialisation. Once he had done all this, announced Engels, the budding German socialist intellectual would realise that all his wisdom was "old stuff, the pros and cons of which have already been thoroughly discussed on the other side of the Rhine and the English Channel years ago".³² Only after the Germans had properly comprehended what had been done before them would they be in a position to show what they themselves could contribute to European socialism.

Within the nascent Rhineland socialist movement Engels thus championed three main lines of action: (i) a careful study of the best foreign socialist theory, (ii) a systematic

32. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 452-453; MECW, 4, p. 644.

effort to collect and disseminate factual information about social problems, and (iii) a tactical alliance with the more enlightened liberal bourgeoisie, co-operating with them through the Associations for the Benefit of the Working Classes. In theory he recognised that the small socialist clubs which had already formed in his absence, and which were composed in the main of students and young professional men with middle-class jobs and backgrounds, ought to be making contact with the working classes. In practice, however, he had no idea how to go about doing this effectively, he was afraid of the police whom he knew were already watching him, and he felt hampered by his connection with his father's firm. Under pressure from his father he had reluctantly agreed to resume work in the Wuppertal office of the business, and, if he were to stay in the Barmen-Elberfeld area and work in the local Association, this seemed the only way of assuring himself of a regular income. Moreover, his father, though disapproving of his atheism and communism, was glad to see that his son had profited from his stay in England to learn about manufacturing and economics, and was willing to allow him time off from work to pursue his economic studies. Given this fragile modus vivendi with his family and the apparently good prospect of exerting substantial influence on the Wuppertal's philanthropic liberals, Engels (with the support of Hess, who had come to reside there too) decided to concentrate his propaganda initially on the middle-classes. He organised a series of public meetings -- or rather 'banquets'

on the French model -- in Elberfeld in February 1845, at which he and Hess undertook to explain the communist viewpoint to an assembled throng of businessmen, officials and professional men. Forty people attended the first meeting, 130 the second, and over 200 the third, or at least so he claimed in a letter to Marx.³³ Engels himself was the principal speaker at the first two meetings. His speeches, later published, provide a useful summary of his views at the time, and indicate that his socialism was largely a mixture of ideas taken from Fourier and Owen.

In his first speech Engels tried to explain what was wrong with contemporary German society and to sketch the economic drawbacks of unrestricted capitalism. He singled out four characteristics of the socio-economic system for adverse comment: the widespread preoccupation with self-enrichment; the growing disparity of income between rich and poor; the atmosphere of mutual antagonism which was turning life into a perpetual war of all against all; and the lack of any rational organisation of the economy or systematic provision of social services. In recent German history, he suggested, there could be detected a number of trends which reflected the direction in which Europe as a whole was moving, namely the decline of the lower middle class, the impoverishment of the lower classes, widening income differentials, centralisation of capital in the hands of a new business élite, and worsening trade crises. Citing the example

33. Engels to Marx, 22-26/2/ & 7/3/45, CME, 1, p. 360.

of England, he predicted that Germany would henceforth be experiencing over-production crises every five to six years. On this occasion he hedged his bets as to the root cause of cyclical crises, pointing to the unplanned and uncertain nature of capitalist production and sales, but also claiming that the inegalitarian distribution of wealth fostered by the economic system necessarily produced an increasing disproportion between working-class production and consumption, thus making over-production more and more likely.³⁴

He then set out to list systematically the economic drawbacks of capitalism. Arguing that the 'laissez-faire' system, combined with private ownership, was extraordinarily inefficient, he claimed that there were at least six forms of wastage which could be eliminated by an egalitarian community practicing economic planning. One was the "prodigious" loss of wealth which resulted from every commercial crisis, when masses of goods were thrown away at discount prices and capital disappeared before "the very eyes" of its owners. Another kind of inefficiency was that denounced by Fourier: the role in trade played by parasitic middlemen.³⁵ Thirdly, there was the cost of maintaining a huge and unproductive state bureaucracy, the justification for which was usually that an extensive governmental apparatus was needed to protect

34. Engels, "Zwei Reden in Elberfeld", Rheinische Jahrbücher zur gesellschaftlichen Reform (ed. H. Puttmann), vol 1, Darmstadt, Leske, 1845, pp. 45-62 & 71-81; reprinted in MEGA I, 4, pp. 367-390; MECW, 4, pp. 243-264.

35. Ibid, loc. cit., MEGA I, 4, pp. 372-373; MECW, 4, pp. 246-247.

society from lawlessness. But if it were possible to largely eliminate crime, then much of this bureaucracy would be superfluous and its personnel could be employed on more productive tasks. Could crime be substantially reduced? Yes, he replied, because it was essentially an expression of the current war of individual against individual, a symptom of a feverish and decadent civilisation. Like Proudhon, he reckoned that the coercive power available to governments was far in excess of that needed to keep order in a more rational and humanely organised society. Hence his conviction -- shared by Owen, Fourier, the Saint-Simonians, and Proudhon, among others -- that it should be possible to gradually dismantle the state apparatus when society had been rebuilt on an ethical foundation.³⁶

Another expensive institution with which communist society could dispense was a professional army. Engels considered that standing armies had two purposes: to protect property and privilege from revolution, and to conduct aggressive wars. A peaceful communal society would therefore need only a citizens' militia for defensive purposes, a popular army on the model of the French revolutionary contingents of 1792-99.³⁷ Middlemen, bureaucrats, and soldiers were thus to Engels so many forms of wasted manpower, and he extended his list to include servants and paupers, neither

36. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 374; MECW, 4, p. 248.

37. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 375-376; MECW, 4, pp. 249-250.

of whom would persist in an egalitarian, planned economy. He was repelled by the way in which the rich indulged in ostentatious luxury, objecting not so much to costly decorative goods as to crowds of "maids, cooks, lackeys, coachmen, domestic servants, gardeners and whatever" who frittered away so many hours of each day ministering to the whims of their employers. The abolition of domestic servants, he calculated, would make available hundreds of thousands of workers to make necessities for the masses.³⁸ He reasoned that a similar large addition to the labour force could be found in the hoards of "destitute workers who would gladly work, but cannot get any work". The pool of unemployed was larger than was commonly believed, he alleged, because apart from those enrolled for poor relief there were also the vast numbers of underemployed who eked out a living by begging, street sweeping, doing occasional odd jobs, hawking, peddling, and being street entertainers. And then there was the problem of prostitution -- a large-scale business whose victims had despaired of finding any other source of income. All in all, pauperism was an immense problem, and it was getting worse all the time. He was still convinced that the root cause of widespread unemployment was the competitive struggle which forced employers to replace men by machines or at least by women and children whose labour cost less. Under capitalism, he concluded, men were constantly devising ways of making other

38. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 376-377; MECW, 4, p. 250.

men destitute.³⁹

Engels was thus certain that society had at its disposal an abundance of labour which only awaited planned, rational organisation. He judged that an optimum use of existing man-power would allow a 50% reduction in working time; this saving would be achieved partly by eliminating wastage but partly by a higher rate of productivity in industry and agriculture. How could this be obtained? Robert Owen had shown the way with a series of "practical" and "fully worked out" proposals which would fuse individual labour into a "social collective power" more creative and efficient than the sum of individual efforts. Engels was thinking of Owen's schemes for total industrial communities, in which several thousand people would live and work together in large 'palaces', thus saving the costs of heating and lighting individual houses and the separate preparation of meals. He probably also had in mind Proudhon's point that a group of workers, co-operating together in an organised fashion, could produce a great deal more than if they worked individually. He was suggesting, in fact, that a communist society would be able to speed up the transformation of artisan manufacturing into large-scale factory industry, and that the efficiency of factories would be greatly enhanced if they each belonged to a commune which functioned as a social unit outside working hours too. But he was also

39. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 377-378; MECW, 4, p. 251.

thinking of practical considerations like providing the working classes with material benefits like central heating, hot water, and gas lighting currently priced beyond their reach. Communal housing, he reasoned, could bring these luxuries to the whole population, and a cleaner, better fed and housed workforce would be more productive than the emaciated wretches now manning the factories.⁴⁰

Perhaps because his audience consisted of middle-class reformers, Engels put considerable emphasis in his speech on practical reforms which would gradually and peacefully improve the existing society. He stressed that there was no question of trying to introduce common ownership overnight or against the will of the nation. Communism was merely a long-run aim, a beacon in the distance indicating the path to be travelled. Such a goal was required because once one recognised that capitalist society was premised on a "fundamental mistake", one needed a long-term strategy for eliminating it. Ad hoc reforms would never strike at the core evil, but a carefully planned series of reforms could prepare the way for a "calm and peaceful transition" to a community organised on different lines. In any case, he warned, the existing regime was in danger, and something had to be done to head off violent uprisings by ignorant and desperate workers like the Silesian weavers. There were only two alternative policies which could be adopted towards the growing

40. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 378-379; MECW, 4, pp. 252-253.

proletariat: it could be repressed still further, at the risk of increased crime and violence, or it could be given education, better pay, and better working conditions. The latter, Engels suggested, was the course most in the interest of both the government and the bourgeoisie.⁴¹ He was, of course, playing on the fears of his middle-class audience, and he hardly regarded the prospect of more uprisings with the same horror as did these 'respectable' citizens, but there seems little doubt that in the early months of 1845 he hoped for a peaceful solution, and thought an alliance of socialists and liberals might generate a reform movement strong enough to bring in 'progressive' legislation surpassing that achieved in England. He believed that three measures, acceptable to both advanced liberals and socially-minded Christians, would bring about a substantial improvement in the condition of the lower classes. They were the creation of a comprehensive and free state educational system, a thorough reorganisation of poor relief, and a major alteration of the taxation system.

Engels placed a high premium on the creation of a free, nation-wide school system to eradicate ignorance among the lower classes. To be effective, he argued, these schools would have to be state-financed, provide a general education (not merely vocational training), and extend to the secondary level; their establishment was in his opinion

41. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 380-381; MECW, 4, pp. 253-255.

clearly a job for the central government, and he had no enthusiasm for proposals which left education to the churches or to local school-boards.⁴² His second reform also envisaged state action. He suggested a drastic revision to the poor relief system, aimed at creating 'colonies' of unemployed which the government would provide with farm-land and workshops. In effect, he was proposing 'national farms' and 'national workshops' on lines similar to those suggested by Louis Blanc, so he may have had L'Organisation du travail at the back of his mind, or possibly he borrowed the scheme from the Chartists. He expected the amount of money required would be no greater than that already spent on poor relief, and claimed that if implemented his plan would be a splendid example of the "association" of capital and labour. He also hoped that the colonies might serve as pilot projects for a future communist society.⁴³

The schools and the 'colonies' would require money, and to raise it he proposed tax reform. The present taxes, he considered, were unjustly distributed, with far too much emphasis on indirect taxes which weighed disproportionately on the less well-off. He suggested a progressive tax on capital, which would place the burden of public administration on those best able to pay. This might sound radical, he admitted, but in fact it involved no change in principle,

42. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 380; MECW, 4, pp. 253-254.

43. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 381; MECW, 4, p. 254.

since it was already generally accepted that the state had the right to levy taxes on private property, a right which infringed the idea that private property was sacrosanct and implied that the state was the "true owner" of all land. It was time, he asserted, to take this latter principle seriously. The state ought to proclaim itself the "common owner" of all property, and, as a first step towards administering this public property for the public good, should introduce a system of taxation based solely on each individual's ability to pay. In this way a progressive capital tax could be used to pave the way towards communal ownership of all land and realty, while in the meantime providing the finance needed for the new system of education and method of poor relief.⁴⁴

Engels' second speech revealed that he thought the road to communism was likely to differ in England, France and Germany. Whereas in England Owenite co-operatives would probably take over the economy piece by piece, in France it was quite on the cards that the 'social revolution' would be legislated after the workers had seized political power. The German case was still open, although it was obvious that the Rhineland, at least, was on the threshold of drastic social changes. The advent of communism, he remarked, could not be demonstrated as a historical necessity, and he had no intention of offering a grand theory of history in the Hegelian tradition. What one could legitimately do was analyse

44. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 381; MECW, 4, pp. 254-255.

the trends evident in the German economy.⁴⁵ He had little doubt that whatever policies the country followed, it was on the verge of an economic catastrophe. To back up this pessimistic diagnosis he examined in turn the several avenues open to German industry in the face of competition from Britain. The Prussian government, which largely determined the economic climate throughout Germany, had three options: to impose highly protective tariffs (as urged by Friedrich List and many businessmen), to abolish duties in the hope that this would force domestic manufacturers to modernise and become competitive, or to maintain the status quo. Each of these 'solutions' he believed to be fraught with peril.⁴⁶

Free trade, he judged, would be disastrous, because the German market would be swamped with cheap foreign goods, and much of German industry would be ruined; the resultant severe depression would provoke desperate working-class rebellions, perhaps even too many to be suppressed by troops. But a continuation of the status quo would not be much better because German industry, relatively content with a fairly secure domestic market, was technologically stagnant. Sooner or later the larger, more modern British firms would be capable of undercutting German prices despite the moderate tariff barrier.⁴⁷ At this point, the government would have to resort to the third option: high protective tariffs

45. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 382; MECW, 4, p. 256.

46. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 384-388; MECW, 4, pp. 258-262.

47. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 387; MECW, 4, pp. 261-262.

designed to exclude British goods entirely. Engels considered thoroughgoing protectionism a solution in the short run, but warned that German firms, safe behind the tariff wall, would stand still technologically, and that eventually they would be so obsolete that nothing could save them.⁴⁸ He recommended instead the gradual reduction of duties after German industry had had a chance to recover and find capital for modernisation. He was uncertain whether this 'breathing-space' policy would work, but he thought it just possible that German enterprises might reach a position of competing on equal terms with the British. If that did happen, he expected a full-scale industrial war would break out between the two nations, a life-and-death struggle in which the British, with greater experience and larger production units, would still have the advantage. There was no chance Britain would agree to partition world markets, he warned, because she needed to maintain her industrial monopoly to survive.⁴⁹ So eventually, either British or German industry would be smashed, sparking off a social revolution in the loser country. A revolution in England, he predicted, would spread to the whole European continent, so in the long run Germany would experience widespread social upheaval one way or the other.

This exercise in long-range forecasting was a little speculative, Engels recognised, but he pointed out that a period of unrestrained competition for world markets between

48. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 385-386; MECW, 4, p. 260.

49. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 387; MECW, 4, p. 261.

the industrialising nations was virtually inevitable. Germany was therefore almost certain to experience, probably in more acute form, the traumatic growing pains which England had suffered during the last fifty years, including, of course, cyclical depressions and the rapid growth of urban slums. If this was to be the nation's future, he suggested it would be well worth the while of all educated Germans to study contemporary England.⁵⁰ This was no doubt a plug for his forthcoming book, because when Engels made these Elberfeld speeches he had the social life of industrial England very much at the front of his mind.

During January and February 1845 he wrote the bulk of his lengthy book on The Condition of the Working Class in England.⁵¹ He interwove in the text three different kinds of material. The core of the work was a descriptive survey of work conditions and housing in a variety of trades and

50. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 385-387; MECW, 4, pp. 259-261.

51. Friedrich Engels, Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England, Leipzig, Wigand, 1845; reprinted in MEGA I, 4, pp. 3-286; MECW, 4, pp. 295-583. Marcus, op. cit., pp. 131-248, appears to be the only extended commentary on Engels' book; it concentrates on his reactions to the industrial city, and is written from a literary and psychological point-of-view. Eric Hobsbawm's "Introduction" to a reprint of the English translation, The Condition of the Working Class in England, London, Panther, 1969, is a brief, sympathetic summary, designed as a reply to the more critical "Editors' Introduction" by William O. Henderson & W.H. Chaloner to their translation, Oxford, Blackwell, 1958. They emphasise Engels' failure to meet modern standards of historical scholarship, and warn that his account did not faithfully reflect urban lower-class working and living conditions in 1844. Henderson has given a short description of the book and repeated his criticisms in his The Life of Friedrich Engels, 2 vols, London, Cass, 1976, vol 1., pp. 48-61 & 69-73.

districts of the British Isles, although he devoted most space and time to the industry and locality he knew best; Lancashire textiles. This part of the book was a rather rambling compilation of evidence drawn from his own experience, newspapers, older books, and local government and parliamentary reports. It was a primitive essay in industrial sociology, providing factual data of the type he had appealed for in his Gesellschaftsspiegel editorial. Secondly, The Condition contained a discussion of the English trade-union movement, strikes, the movement of real wages, factory legislation, Chartism, Owenism, the instability of the British economy, cyclical business crises, and the future growth of mechanised industry. His ideas on these subjects were the fruit of his reading, contacts and personal experience in Manchester, and there is no reason to believe he changed them between September 1844, when he discussed such matters with Marx in Paris, and the early months of 1845 when he wrote them down in his book. In the third place, he included in The Condition the general perspective on English society which he had expressed earlier in his article on Carlyle in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher and in his Vorwärts! pieces. He reiterated his opinion that England was a sick, fragmented, and bitterly divided nation, and that relations between classes were a form of 'social war'. As noted earlier, he consciously intended the book to be an indictment of the English bourgeoisie for 'social murder'. In addition, he tried to predict the outcome of the conflict and to

assess the chances for political and social reform.

I have already discussed, in a previous chapter, Engels' views on the British labour movement, strikes, wages, economic crises, etc. Nor was his general picture of English society different from the one he sketched to Marx in August/September 1844, so there is no need to repeat this either. But there remain two other respects in which The Condition provides important evidence concerning the quality and thrust of Engels' socialism in early 1845. As he wrote the book he worked out his ideas on how the material circumstances of the urban worker affected his psyche, or, to put it another way, how poverty and exhaustion 'caused' emotions of weary resignation and/or indignant rebellion in the breasts of the proletariat. And secondly, the manuscript betrayed its author's ambivalence about the future course of events in England. On several occasions in the text Engels suggested the viability of gradual social change, with the combined forces of the English 'left' (trade-unions, Chartists, Owenites, and factory-reformers) pressuring the English parliament to grant both universal suffrage and far-reaching social reform legislation. But he ended the work with a violent onslaught on the intransigence of the English bourgeoisie, and a dire warning that it was now too late to prevent violent revolution.⁵² Clearly the two positions were inconsistent, and

52. Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse, 282; MECW, 4, pp. 582-583.

MEGA I, 4, pp. 281-

something had occurred to make Engels change his mind on the reform versus revolution issue before he penned his last chapter, "The attitude of the bourgeoisie towards the proletariat" in March. I propose, therefore, to focus my remarks about The Condition on these two aspects of the work.

The thing that had struck Engels most when he first arrived in Manchester, he recalled in The Condition, had been unemployment. The slump of 1842 had been the most violent experienced by the textile industry, and had resulted in a state of "general insurrection" throughout the manufacturing districts in August, and although by November, when Engels arrived, the riots had been suppressed, the atmosphere was still tense.⁵³ This first impression of the industrial north had evidently convinced Engels that something had gone drastically wrong in England. It probably gave him the emotional shock which motivated him to study economic theory and English socialist literature, and to travel around Lancashire and Yorkshire observing working-class life. However, in the next few months most of the unemployed had gradually found work as the factories started up again, and he had then begun to build up a picture of the more permanent features of urban 'civilisation'.

He was scandalised by the crowded, jerry-built tenements of Manchester, Salford, Bolton, Stockport, Liverpool, Leeds, and other northern cities, and filled page after page

53. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 89; MECW, 4, p. 387.

of The Condition with descriptions of back-to-back row housing with primitive sanitation. Over-crowding and pollution from the smoky factories deprived the slum dwellers of air and light, he reported, and everywhere the houses were decaying. Damp, dirt and cold were the normal accompaniments of the worker and his family in the brief hours they were released from the factory. Naturally, he added, the insanitary housing conditions and the overcrowding were two of the main reasons for the severe problems of public health in the industrial cities.⁵⁴

He observed that the air breathed by the slum-dwellers was poisonous because putrefying vegetables and offal, dirty water, garbage, and excrement were all thrown into the streets and rivers, and ventilation was so inadequate that fetid gases could not escape. The poor health of the average town-dweller was due in part to diseases spread by this decaying refuse, and in part to chronic respiratory ailments caused by the noxious, oxygen-starved atmosphere. The problem was compounded by the frequent lack of running water, which made household cleanliness difficult, and meant that typhus spread easily. Epidemics were rife, and cholera also had so ravaged the slums that municipal health commissions tried spasmodically and ineffectually to clean up a few of the worst areas. But the "Augean stables" were simply too vast for a few local government officials to deal with, and they, in any case, were

54. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 66; MECW, 4, p. 364.

powerless to cleanse the atmosphere. Of the epidemics, Engels added, scarlet fever was the third major killer, while the chronic ailment of consumption was also rampant, producing "pale, lank, narrow-chested, hollow-eyed ghosts (with) languid, flabby faces, incapable of the slightest energetic expression".⁵⁵

The poor diets and clothing of many working-class families, he continued, indicated their living standards were rock-bottom. Drawing partly on his own observations and partly on published accounts of the condition of Lancashire workers (in particular, on Peter Gaskell's The Manufacturing Population of England), he claimed that the quality of workers' clothing had deteriorated since the eighteenth century because cotton had largely taken the place of wool and linen. Many workers' garments were in bad condition, covered with patches and tears, often bought second-hand, and some working families were too poor to purchase shoes. But even when the slum-dweller was apparently adequately clothed and shod his mass-produced garments were much poorer than those produced for the bourgeoisie; the worker, in a word, obtained only what was "too bad for the property-holding class".⁵⁶ The same was true of food. Unable to purchase best-quality foodstuffs, poorer families had to make do with tough and decaying

55. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 95-99; MECW, 4, pp. 394-399.

56. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 69-70; MECW, 4, pp. 366-368. Peter Gaskell, The manufacturing Population of England, its moral, social and physical conditions, and the changes which have arisen from the use of steam machinery, with an examination of infant labour, London, Baldwin & Craddock, 1833.

meat and wilted vegetables. Food unfit for human consumption was frequently palmed off on the lower-class consumer, and adulteration of staples like flour, sugar, butter, coffee, tea and tobacco was common. Fraud was practised in the sale of all kinds of articles, Engels added, giving as examples narrow cloth, unshrunk stockings, and thinly-glazed pottery, and commenting that "the lion's share of all the evil results of these frauds" fell to the workers because the rich could pay higher prices at large stores with reputations to lose. The small retailers frequented by the workers also frequently used false weights and measures, so that their customers lost out on quantity as well as quality.⁵⁷

Not all urban workers were suffering the worst forms of poverty that he had described, he admitted; indeed there was in the great cities a "graduated scale of conditions" with the best-paid workers enjoying relatively good food and housing while the poorest endured "bitter want, reaching even homelessness and death". The average, he claimed, was "much nearer the worst case than the best", and even the well-off workers were subject to continual job insecurity, so that they could not count on maintaining their living standards from one month to the next. Mechanisation had so disrupted the traditional labour market that workingmen's incomes had fluctuated wildly in the last few decades and uncertainty

57. Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse, MEGA I, 4, p. 76; MECW, 4, p. 373.

had become a standard feature of lower-class life.⁵⁸ This insecurity was undermining the health of many working-class families, and Engels was convinced that, on average, the physique of urban workers was degenerating. The decline was due only in part to poor diet, clothing and housing. Another significant cause was unhealthy working conditions in the mines and factories. Coal and metal-ore mines, he explained, were extremely dangerous places. The miners constantly risked explosions and rock-falls, and were continually exposed to heart, digestive and lung diseases caused by the heat and dust in the seams. He charged that these diseases and explosions due to fire-damp could be avoided if the mines were better ventilated, but the mine-owners refused to divert some of their profits to save the lives of the 1,400 men killed yearly in mining accidents. Even a Mining Act passed by parliament in 1842 in an attempt to restrict child and female labour had been resisted and evaded by the owners, so that it had remained a dead letter in most districts. He therefore judged the mining industry scandalously inhumane in its treatment of employees, and he regarded the 1844 miners' strike as a perfectly legitimate protest against callous and ruthless exploitation.⁵⁹

There were plenty of other workers, he pointed out, who had to endure conditions almost as dangerous and injurious

58. *Ibid.*, MEGA I, 4, p. 76; MECW, 4, pp. 373-374.

59. *Ibid.*, MEGA I, 4, pp. 232-246; MECW, 4, pp. 533-547.

to health. One could see this by reading the Reports of the Factory Inquiry Commission of 1833 and the more recent Factory Inspectors' Report for 1843. The former, for example, showed the harmful effects on children of long working-hours in factories, providing abundant evidence of spinal curvature, crippled limbs, stunted growth, poor resistance to illness, and mental debility among factory children. Similar deformities and disabilities were common among women factory operatives, while men were usually worn-out and unable to work by the age of 45. He added on the basis of his personal observation that premature aging was almost universal among the Manchester work-force, and that prolonged factory-work clearly curtailed the lives of employees in cotton mills. Apart from the harm done to their bodies by perpetual repetition of a few actions, operatives in some branches of manufacturing were, like the miners, prone to industrial diseases and accidents. In the cotton and flax-spinning mills, for instance, the air was filled with fibrous dust, the continual breathing of which caused "blood-spitting, hard noisy breathing, pains in the chest, coughs, sleeplessness", while unguarded factory machinery commonly caused injuries ranging from the loss of a finger to death. Most accidents were preventable, he alleged, if only the bourgeoisie was prepared to sacrifice profits a little, because machinery could be fenced, stopped for cleaning, and tended by workers who were neither children nor dropping from fatigue due to excessively long working-hours. Much the same was true, he added, of the

occupational diseases of Staffordshire pottery workers and Sheffield grinders; paralysis caused by arsenic poisoning in the case of the former, and consumption due to breathing steel dust in the case of the latter, could both be substantially mitigated by protective clothing. Engels' conclusion, therefore, was that industrial injuries and diseases could be ascribed largely to criminal negligence. The manufacturers, he contended, should be required by law to provide lifelong support to incapacitated operatives, and should also support the victim's family in cases of death.⁶⁰

But although Engels was horrified at the physical deterioration of the average industrial worker, he did not consider this the worst consequence of industrial capitalism. He believed that the psychological and moral effects of the factory system were even more disastrous, and much less easily remedied. The urban worker was in his eyes rapidly being 'dehumanised', that is, reduced to the mental level of an animal or worse. Engels, in fact, offered in The Condition a theory of 'alienated labour' similar -- less systematic but more concrete -- to Marx's.

His Vorwärts! articles proved that he had already sketched several of the main elements of a general theory of 'alienation' before leaving Britain, but at that time he had not properly pulled together his thoughts on the subject. In the fall of 1844 he was still working out his ideas, and

60. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 147-160; MECW, 4, pp. 443-457.

his conversations with Marx no doubt helped give them form. Still, he employed a more direct, if also more prosaic, approach to social problems than Marx, and the formulation given to the theory of industrial dehumanisation in The Condition of the Working Class in England reflected his practical way of thinking, not Marx's more academic approach. There were three stages to his analysis: (i) the causes of alienation, (ii) resultant states of mind and morals in the workforce, and (iii) various consequences of these mental and emotional reactions. The structure of the theory was causal, but it was in the main non-deterministic, because Engels allowed for a variety of human responses to causal stimuli, and made no claims that the response of an individual worker to his situation could be predicted.⁶¹

He claimed that the average urban worker's mind was as unhealthy as his body, and ascribed this mental sickness to four broad categories of cause: monadisation, fetishism, reification, and wage-slavery. He used the first and last of these terms in The Condition: the other two he picked up later from Marx, but they describe what he meant, so I will adopt them for convenience. As in his Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher articles and his pieces in Vorwärts!, he stressed

61. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 112-129 & 169-172; MECW, 4, pp. 411-426 & 466-469. Engels seems to have had a more flexible concept of causation than Hume's constant conjunction; he apparently did not believe in universal determinism, although he did sometimes explain English working-class behaviour in deterministic language.

the atomisation of modern society due to the spread of commerce. Business had become the primary link between human beings, and the breakdown of traditional communities had left an emotional void which modern individualism was unable to fill. This reduction of men to monads had been exacerbated by urbanisation, partly because men felt more isolated among unknown crowds, partly because the division between classes was overt and acute in the cities.⁶² Furthermore, the worker felt increasingly that his fate was in the hands of alien forces which he did not understand and which he was unable to control. He had to depend on himself alone to secure a living, but was often prevented by external factors from making use of his skill or his labour-power. The powerlessness was depressing, and resulted in an attitude of "enjoy life while one can and let tomorrow look after itself". Such fatalism, remarked Engels, was quite understandable in the circumstances, but this kind of life was "demoralising beyond all others".⁶³

A third cause of alienation was the reduction of workers to the status of machines and commodities. Mere cogs in the industrial machine, the factory labourers were treated as 'cost factors' subject to the laws of the marketplace. They received no education -- moral or intellectual -- so that many remained ignorant, stupid and immoral, fit

62. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 30 & 118; MECW, 4, pp. 329 & 416.

63. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 114-115; MECW, 4, pp. 413-414.

for little more than the grinding mechanical tasks which filled up their waking hours. Treated not as human beings but as extensions of machines, they gradually became the objects they were perceived to be.⁶⁴ Finally, there was wage-slavery: soul-destroying, compulsory, mechanical labour. Engels considered voluntary productive work as the highest enjoyment known to man, while compulsory toil in a factory was "the most cruel, degrading punishment".⁶⁵ The three aspects of automated wage-slavery on which he focussed were the tedium of routine tasks (which destroyed creativity), factory discipline (which he claimed was frequently arbitrary and tyrannical), and the utter dependence of the worker on the manufacturer (which he saw as destroying the worker's residue of liberty). For the operatives, he commented, the factory system meant the end of all freedom "in law and in fact", a form of burial alive which they felt as "the keenest torture".⁶⁶ Engels did not, however, regard dehumanisation as inevitable. The proletarian, he argued, had two, and only two, alternative courses of action open to him. He could either accept his fate or rebel against it. If he accepted it he would sink into a mood of demoralised apathy, squandering his pay in drunken orgies to forget briefly the hell of his daily life. If he rebelled he might, or might

64. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 113-117 & 169-172; MECW, 4, pp. 411-415 & 466-469.

65. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 117; MECW, 4, p. 415.

66. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 169; MECW, 4, p. 466.

not, escape demoralisation, depending on the direction his rebellion took.

He reported that most English workers received minimal education, and were de facto atheists because organised religion had failed to reach them. The traditional family, he claimed, was breaking down in the new urban centres because the employment of women in factories made it impossible for them to bring up their children and care adequately for their husbands. Lacking education, religion, and strong family ties, alienated workers responded in a variety of unconventional ways to their situation. Those who were resigned to their lot tried to make the best of it either by seeking oblivion through drunkenness, or by pursuing in their free time a hedonistic life-style centred around entertainment and sex. Sexual immorality was rife among the lower classes.⁶⁷ Other workers, seduced by Methodism or by the capitalist spirit, accepted the values of the bourgeoisie and tried to climb out of their lowly social position by hard work, saving, and carefully looking after their personal interests. Egoistic self-seeking of this kind might benefit a minority, Engels admitted, but the ravages of fortune condemned most such efforts to futility, while the successful few had in his opinion bought a higher living-standard by embracing an evil ethic. A common form of revolt against industrial life, he continued, was spontaneous crime. Accepting that worker

67. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 124-126; MECW, 4, pp. 421-423.

crime was a serious problem for the authorities in the great conurbations, he explained it as an inevitable -- and excusable -- response to exploitation. Social crime, he implied, was a legitimate, if rather ineffectual, weapon in the social war between proletariat and bourgeoisie. Engels' explanation of worker crime showed his thinking at its most deterministic -- here the influence of Owen's environmental determinism was very evident. Crime, he claimed, was an expression of extreme contempt for the existing social order. If the influences demoralising the workingman acted more powerfully and concentratedly than usual, he would become an offender "as certainly as water abandons the fluid for vaporous state at 80 degrees Reaumur".⁶⁸

Engels thus disapproved of the first three types of worker response to factory life (drunkenness, hedonism, and self-seeking), and considered the fourth, crime, futile if scarcely blameworthy. Sometimes, however, the workingman transcended these primitive responses and discovered ways of fighting capitalism which were at once morally superior and more effective. To start with, many workers rejected the bourgeois ethic of looking after one's own interests and letting others fend for themselves. Having experienced hard times themselves, they felt for those in trouble and were "more approachable, friendlier, and less greedy for money", giving more to the very poor than did the rich. Linked with

68. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 127; MECW, 4, p. 425.

this working-class humanitarianism was a sense of class solidarity, which found expression in the co-operative movement and, above all, in the trade unions. The British workers were in his view beginning to develop their own morality and organisations distinct from and opposed to bourgeois values and institutions. This was a form of constructive rebellion of which he heartily approved.⁶⁹ Some workers, he suggested, were going even further. They had recognised the need to understand their situation, and had also recognised that to do so they would have to educate themselves. They had accepted too the need to organise politically, which explained the growth of Chartism and Owenism alongside the trade-union movement. Politics and self-education went hand-in-hand for the English militant, he noted: trade-unionists, Chartists and Socialists had all founded their own evening schools and reading-rooms in which "proletarian journals and books alone, or almost alone" were to be found.

To Engels, these workingmen's schools were a major achievement; they provided high quality (and well attended) lectures on science, aesthetics and economics, and all-in-all gave a "solid education...unmixed with the interested cant of the bourgeoisie".⁷⁰ He had been impressed while in Manchester by the high standard of intelligence and knowledge exhibited by the Chartist and Owenite militants of the

69. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 120, 122, 203 & 213-214; MECW, 4, pp. 418, 420, 502 & 512-513.

70. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 226-227; MECW, 4, pp. 527-528.

area. He reported that he had often heard workingmen speak on subjects like geology and astronomy "with more knowledge than most 'cultivated bourgeois' in Germany". In many respects, he claimed, the self-educated worker's knowledge was also more advanced than that of his English bourgeois counterpart because "the epoch-making products of modern philosophical, political and poetical literature" were read almost exclusively by the lower classes. Socialist societies and small-scale left-wing printing shops had "done wonders" for the education of the proletariat by publishing cheap translations of French materialists like Helvetius, Holbach and Diderot, Proudhon's Property, and Strauss' Life of Jesus; they also circulated in large quantities the works of Godwin, Bentham, Shelley ("the genius, the prophet"), and Byron "with his glowing sensuality and his bitter satire on our existing society". He concluded that the proletariat had formed on the basis of these and other works "a literature consisting chiefly of journals and pamphlets [but] far in advance of the whole bourgeois literature in intrinsic worth".⁷¹

Despite his continual use of the general label 'the proletariat', the overall picture which emerged from Engels' descriptions of working-class life was not at all one of a homogeneous class. He said just enough about artisans in Birmingham, Staffordshire and elsewhere to indicate that

71. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 227-228; MECW, 4, p. 528.

steam-powered factory industry did not dominate English manufacturing to quite the extent that he implied in most of the book. And this, of course, entailed that there was a fundamental division among the 'working-class' between skilled craftsmen and unskilled or semi-skilled factory 'hands'. Moreover, his account revealed that the traditions, type of work, and education of the miners were substantially different from, say, those of the textile workers, and in any case varied considerably from locality to locality. His own evidence thus demonstrated that he had ignored, or at least downplayed excessively, regional divergencies and differences in skill between types of worker. To this criticism he could have replied, legitimately enough, that these were disappearing as factory production took over more and more branches of industry, but he drastically overestimated the rate at which this was happening. More important, however, his survey indicated that the British lower classes could be divided into two groups: a mass of ignorant, unskilled wage-labourers, increasingly employed in factories, prone to drunkenness and dissipation, and passively resigned to their fate; and a smaller élite of comparatively well-educated rebels, usually skilled workers, and often trade-union militants. It was from this latter group that the Chartist leaders had emerged, and Owenism had found its supporters. These, too, were the men who frequented 'proletarian' reading-rooms, attended socialist lectures, and impressed Engels with their knowledge of Shelley, Paine and Godwin. In his

optimism he grossly over-rated both the numerical size and the radicalism of this working-class élite, and also conveniently ignored the fact that many, probably most, of its members were skilled craftsmen of the old type. The rather exceptional character of the Lancashire textile area had misled him in these respects.

Engels' admiration for the intelligence and culture of British labour militants significantly influenced his estimate of what was going to happen in Britain in the near future. He had been impressed by the strength of the reform movement in England, and he reckoned that the power of the English trade union movement was growing. He expected that Chartism would eventually -- and probably sooner than later -- be successful in its main demand, that of universal suffrage, and he thought it quite feasible that the House of Commons would be turned into a genuinely democratic instrument of really representative government. He viewed badly ventilated mines, unguarded machinery, child-labour and lengthy working hours as so many abuses of the factory system which could be cleared up without an immediate change in the economic system. He was convinced that social reforms were feasible under industrial capitalism, and that a campaign by the workers' organisations aided by enlightened intellectuals and Tory philanthropists might succeed in curing the worst inhumanities. Given the financial and political power of the employers, it would not be easy to extract this reform legislation, he recognised, but the proof that things were

getting a little better lay in measures like Lord Ashley's Act (1842), and the Ten Hours Bill then being debated by Parliament, which he was sure would be passed. He hoped that a combination of strong moral pressure from public opinion and high profits would, with a little government prodding, persuade the British industrialists that they could, after all, afford safety precautions and shorter working hours. Thus Engels looked forward to an industrial Britain where the factory system would no longer be physically detrimental to the work-force, and in which the factories would be scattered throughout the countryside, relieving the 'hands' of the necessity of living in the great conurbations he loathed. Factory legislation and a planned dispersal of industry were the two lines of social reform he suggested could be acted on immediately.⁷²

There was thus a good deal of evidence from which one could legitimately infer that the author of The Condition was still optimistic about the chances of the English 'left' achieving substantial political and social progress within the framework of the existing order.⁷³ Moreover, his support of a reformist strategy by the English working-class chimed in with his advocacy of co-operation with the philanthropic bourgeoisie in Germany. Yet in his conclusion to The Condition Engels wrote: "The revolution must come; it is already

72. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 168-169, 217 & 224; MECW, 4, pp. 465-466, 518 & 524.

73. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 169; MECW, 4, p. 466.

too late to bring about a peaceful solution", and also contended that it was quite possible that the forthcoming war of poor against rich would be the "bloodiest ever waged".⁷⁴ Why did he feel compelled to add these apocalyptic predictions which were out of harmony with the rest of the book? Three factors seem to have combined to turn him from a reformist into an emotional revolutionary: the apparent decline of the English labour movement as an effective force, the seeming failure of his strategy in the Rhineland, and the collapse of his modus vivendi with his family.

As mentioned earlier, Engels had, during his last summer in England, become emotionally committed to the cause of the Miners' Federation, and, after returning to Germany, he followed avidly the fate of this and other British labour disputes by scouring The Times and the Manchester Guardian for reports. He discussed the miners' strike in The Condition, describing its course in detail and sorrowfully recording the defeat of the workers at the end of September, which he ascribed to the mine-owners' ruthless expulsion of the strikers from their tied cottages and the introduction of Welsh and Irish scabs. While the miners had exhibited during the five months battle an extraordinary "endurance, courage, intelligence and coolness", he asserted, the employers had revealed themselves as cruel and brutal.⁷⁵ As

74. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 280-281; MECW, 4, pp. 581-582.

75. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 240-246; MECW, 4, pp. 541-547.

a supplement to The Condition he wrote up the story of another prolonged strike, this time by Manchester building workers, in which the employers also showed great determination to break the local craft-union and impose longer working-hours on their employees.⁷⁶ To Engels these labour disputes demonstrated that the English bourgeoisie, far from becoming more humane and rational in its dealings with the work-force, was growing increasingly embittered and intransigent. He characterised the employers' attitude as "blind insanity", and gloomily concluded that they were determined to ignore all warnings and provoke a general showdown with the unions.⁷⁷

In England, then, efforts at reform by philanthropists, unionists and Chartists seemed to have met a brick wall of stubborn opposition from the majority of entrepreneurs and politicians. The atmosphere changed too in the Rhineland in February and March 1845. Here the groundswell for reform which had so excited Engels a few months earlier was stamped out by the Prussian government, which decided things had gone too far. The police clamped down on workers' associations, banned public meetings on social questions, and kept the Associations for the Benefit of the Working Classes under close scrutiny, thus branding them as overtly

76. Engels, "Nachträgliches über die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England: I. Ein englischer Turnout", Das Westphälische Dampfboot, January 1846, pp. 17-21 & February 1846, pp. 61-67; reprinted in MEGA I, 4, pp. 391-405; MECW, 4, pp. 584-596.

77. Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse, MEGA I, 4, pp. 245-246; MECW, 4, pp. 546-547.

anti-governmental organisations. In the face of this hostility, many moderate liberals who had initially supported the reform movement backed down, and the Associations were forced **either to** disband or maintain a low profile to avoid further persecution. The number of committed reformers willing to forthrightly oppose the status quo turned out to be far smaller than Engels had hoped, and the prospects for immediate factory legislation and tax reform seemed to have evaporated. In Elberfeld he and Hess quickly felt the wind of reaction; they received a circular from the provincial authorities banning their propaganda activities, and police were sent to their fourth public 'banquet' to break it up and arrest the ring-leaders should any speeches be made. The organisers decided discretion was the better part of valour, and the assembled company munched its beef-steaks in silence.⁷⁸ It was the end of Engels' campaign of oral propaganda in the Wuppertal, and it looked as though socialism would be able to spread in the area only clandestinely, through personal contacts and illegal literature. To be sure, Hess' Gesellschaftsspiegel had not yet been banned, but one could reasonably predict that the censor was going to give it a rough ride, and also that its potential market had been reduced by the hardening of public opinion against communism. The prospects for a flourishing socialist movement in Elberfeld suddenly looked much bleaker than they had

78. "Rapid Progress of Communism in Germany, III", The New Moral World, no 46, 10/5/45, MEGA I, 4, p. 346; MECW, 4, p. 239.

at the beginning of the year. But while government repression could eliminate most of the outward manifestations of opposition, it did nothing to relieve the agony of the poor. This, reasoned Engels, was like jamming the lid down on a steam-boiler, a sure way of producing an explosion. And when the upheaval came it would not be channelled by rational and educated leaders of socialist societies into a current of constructive reform, but would sweep like a tidal wave over the existing society, obliterating its institutions indiscriminately. Like employer intransigence in England, he concluded, government intransigence in Prussia would provoke revolution, and revolution when it came could well be bloodier than the Terror.⁷⁹

Engels' change of mind from optimistic reformism to revolutionary pessimism was thus a reaction to current events in England and Germany. But personal factors influenced his feelings too. His Elberfeld meetings, and his continued close friendship with Hess and other quasi-bohemian communist 'characters' in the area, had provoked a violent quarrel with his father. The latter strongly disapproved of Engels' views, but had tolerated them while his son kept them to himself and worked hard on what was ostensibly a scholarly book about English urban society. Public speeches advocating communism, however, were more than he could stomach; they gave

79. "Zwei Reden über Kommunismus", loc. cit., MEGA I, 4, pp. 338-389; MECW, 4, pp. 262-263.

his respectable family a bad name, and it appeared that Friedrich had narrowly escaped being jailed. Convinced that Hess was a bad influence, Engels' father forbade his son to associate publicly with him, which meant that he would be able to participate in the Gesellschaftsspiegel only anonymously. He also cut Friedrich's allowance, declaring that he was prepared to finance his son's studies but not his communist propaganda. Then there was the problem of The Holy Family, which would soon arrive in the Wuppertal bookstores; not only would Engels' father find its content nonsensical and berate his son for wasting his time; he would also, as a highly religious man, be deeply offended by the new title.⁸⁰ Nor was he likely to take kindly to the hostile judgements on textile manufacturers which were scattered through the pages of The Condition, although some of its author's remarks might appeal to his hatred of English liberalism.

Life in his parents' house was becoming increasingly difficult for Engels. He felt an outcast there, the object of suspicion, hostility and pity on the part of his conservative and religious relatives. "I am currently living a real dog's life", he reported to Marx, adding that he couldn't "eat, drink, sleep or break wind without sensing the disapproving scrutiny of the sacred image of the Son of God".⁸¹

80. Engels to Marx, 22-26/2/ & 7/3/45, CME, 1, p. 363;
Engels to Marx, 17/3/45, CME, 1, pp. 368-369.

81. Engels to Marx, 17/3/45, CME, 1, p. 368.

The atmosphere in the house had begun to turn sour in early February after the Elberfeld meetings, but the tension came to a head only in mid-March when Engels informed his father that he was quitting the family firm. This, for Engels' father, was the last straw, and from then on there was no question but that his son would have to leave the Wuppertal and create an independent life elsewhere. Friedrich had not taken this decision lightly. He had contemplated it for six months, but had initially rejected making the break and had tried to endure routine office work for a while in Barmen in the hope that his father would soon send him abroad again on extended business trips. But the sense of living a schizophrenic existence, simultaneously communist agitator and exploiting businessman, was more than he could take.⁸²

Eventually, then, Engels took his courage in both hands and made the break, placing his convictions before his livelihood. But it was not a pleasant or easy choice, and he resented having to make it. For his predicament he blamed, in general, the German liberals who had backed down from the reform movement when the going got hot, and in particular his father, whom he now wrote off contemptuously as a stupid, authoritarian bigot. No doubt his father's uncomprehending intransigence merged in his mind with the stubborn refusal of English mine-owners and building contractors to acquiesce in their employees' demands. He carefully avoided a third major row with his family, and expressed his anger instead in

82. Engels to Marx, 20/1/45, CME, 1, pp. 357-358.

the concluding chapter of The Condition, which he finished in mid-March, just after quitting the family firm. Despite the fact that a few members of the bourgeoisie had shown themselves to be "honourable exceptions", he wrote, one had now to recognise that the "prejudices of a whole class" could not be laid aside "like an old coat", and that the antagonism between capitalists and proletariat was continually sharpening. Economic forces, he rationalised, were stronger than the puny efforts of individuals like himself to form a reformist alliance bridging the class chasm. When it came to the crunch, the economic interests of men like his father made them hardened opponents of far-reaching social reform. Given this intransigence, change could only come by means of revolution.⁸³

He still hoped that undue violence could be avoided. If it was already too late to bring about a completely peaceful solution, at least the revolution could be made "gently". This would depend, however, on how much influence humanitarian and rational communist 'educators' had over the proletariat. "In proportion", he claimed, "as the proletariat absorbs socialistic and communistic elements, will the revolution diminish in bloodshed, revenge, and savagery". Communism, indeed, was now the only hope left of bridging the chasm between bourgeoisie and proletariat, the only way of creating a unified "humanity" unmarred by selfishness, fear and

83. Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse, MEGA I, 4, p. 280; MECW, 4, p. 581.

bitterness. The vital task, therefore, was to educate the working-class in humanitarian and communitarian values before it was too late.⁸⁴ Only by abandoning his commercial career, Engels convinced himself, could he devote his life to this endeavour. He left his parents' house in April 1845, and went to join his new friend Marx in Brussels.

84. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 280-281; MECW, 4, pp. 581-582.

CHAPTER 11
THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY, 1845-46

Engels, thoroughly disillusioned with the liberal reform movement in the Rhineland, joined Marx in Brussels in April 1845. He impressed on his friend the contrast between the 'backward' German middle classes, timid in liberal theory and unenterprising as businessmen, and their ruthless and materialistic English counterparts. Marx, he urged, should visit industrial England to see for himself the urban society created by advanced capitalism. This suggestion accorded with Marx's own plans, and the two men consequently spent the summer of 1845 in Manchester and London.¹ The visit was important for three reasons: Marx read and collected a considerable body of material on economics and English socialism to which he had previously not had access; he obtained a brief first-hand impression of large-scale factory industry and comparatively well-developed English labour movement; and the two Germans made several useful personal contacts. For example, Engels renewed his acquaint-

1. Marx's reading notes while staying in Manchester were reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 598 & 600-618. Engels reported a mass meeting of European radical democrats held in London in September 1845 in the Rheinische Jahrbücher zur Gesellschaftlichen Reform, vol 2, 1846, pp. 1-19; the article, "Das Fest der Nationen in London", was reprinted in MEGA I, 4, pp. 455-471.

tance with George Julian Harney, the leader of the more radical wing of the Chartists, who was then organising a new republican-socialist workers' organisation in London, the Democratic Association. Through Harney he got in touch with a secret society of German artisans, the London branch of the League of the Just, currently run by Karl Schapper, Joseph Moll and Heinrich Bauer. And, possibly also renewing his friendship with Godwin Barmby, he introduced Marx to the opinions of English Owenites and Christian socialists like Holyoake, Morgan, Southwell, Greaves, Spence and Hobson, thus convincing him that there existed a 'school' of English communists equivalent to the French.² By the time he left England, Marx had a much firmer grasp of the power of mechanised industry to transform traditional society, and also a better sense of the potential strength which a socialist labour movement might be able to amass in industrial Britain. Previously his view of the proletariat, although influenced by Engels' writings and conversation, had been formed primarily from his experience of Rhenish and Parisian artisans. Now he increasingly adopted Engels' habit of looking on English economic life and the English labour movement as a model of what could be expected to emerge on the continent in the near future.

This general shift in Marx's vision from a French to

2. Marx & Engels, Die deutsche Ideologie, unpublished manuscript, MEGA I, 5, p. 444; MECW, p. 461.

an English perspective was not to be fully evident until he published The Poverty of Philosophy (1847), in which his approach to economics was to be sharply at odds with that expressed earlier in the Paris Manuscripts. Even before he visited England Marx, as we have seen, had already begun the reading programme which ultimately led him to change his approach to political economy. But it was probably mainly the materials he perused in Manchester, together with those studied in Brussels during the winter of 1845-6, that persuaded him gradually to abandon the 'ethical' critique of classical political economy which he had derived from Pecqueur, Buret and Sismondi (among others).

The contents of Marx's extant notebooks filled in Manchester and Brussels between July 1845 and August 1846 divide into four categories: historical materials; works on the current state of the British economy; texts on economic theory; and books and pamphlets by English socialists.³ He was attempting to obtain from primary sources a grasp of the historical development of the British economy since the sixteenth century, and he therefore read a number of seventeenth and eighteenth-century essays on commerce, taxation and population growth, including works by Charles d'Avenant, William Petty, Edward Misselden and Charles I. He also wanted to gain a clear understanding of the current state of

3. Marx, "Exzerptheftes aus Brüssel und Manchester, 1845-1847", MEGA I, 6, pp. 597-618.

prosperity of the economy, and how it had evolved since the end of the Napoleonic Wars. To this end he read a general survey by G. Browning, The Domestic and Financial Condition of Great Britain, and several more specialised books on the topics of population growth, the evolution of prices, the development of the banking system, taxation, the state of agriculture (and in particular, the history of the Corn Laws and their consequences), and the condition of the working classes. Of these, the ones which impressed and interested him most were Michael Sadler's The Law of Population (an anti-Malthusian tract which denied the "superfecundity of human beings" and ascribed population growth to improved agricultural yields, expanded trade and economic expansion generally), from which he took 151 excerpts; Thomas Tooke's History of Prices (91 excerpts); William Cobbett's Paper against Gold and William Gilbert's The History and Principles of Banking, books on monetary theory and practice (150 and 110 excerpts respectively); and John Wade's History of the Middle and Working Classes (193 excerpts).⁴ This latter

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4. Charles d'Avenant, Discourses on the Public Revenues and on the Trade of England, London, Knapton, 1698; William Petty, An Essay Concerning the Multiplication of Mankind: Together with another Essay in Political Arithmetic, Concerning the Growth of the City of London, with the measures, causes and consequences thereof, London, Clavel, 1698; Edward Misselden, Free Trade or the means to make trade flourish, London, Legath, 1622; Charles I, His Majesties Propriety and Dominion on the British Seas asserted together with a true account of the Netherlanders Insupportable Insolences, London, Clavel, 1665; G. Browning, The Domestic and Financial Condition of Great Britain, preceded by a brief sketch of her foreign policy, and of the statistics and politics of France, Russia, Austria (cont'd)

work, recommended to him by Engels, who had drawn on it for The Condition of the English Working Classes, Marx found of great use. It gave a succinct chronology of reform-proposals, parliamentary debates and legislation concerning pauperism and factory labour, and a clear, concise survey of practical economic problems. Wade discussed, among other things, the division of labour, the accumulation of capital, different types of capitalism, the monetary system, the virtues and drawbacks of paper currency, the factors affecting wage-rates, the efficacy of trade unions and mutual-aid societies, agricultural productivity and land-rent, the problem of over-population, and the question of poor-law relief. He also included much factual information on the movement of prices, wages, poor-rates, savings deposits, mortality rates, and population levels. His general perspective was that of a Benthamite liberal with a social conscience, influenced enough

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4. (cont'd) and Prussia, London, Longman, 1834; Michael Sadler, The Laws of Population, a treatise in disproof of the super-fecundity of human beings, and developing the real principle of their increase, 2 vols, London, Murray, 1830; Thomas Tooke, A History of Prices, and of the state of the circulation from 1793 to 1837, preceded by a brief sketch of the corn trade in the last two centuries, 2 vols, London, Longman, 1838; William Cobbett, Paper against Gold, on the history and mystery of the Bank of England, of the debt, of the stocks, of the sinking fund, and of all the other tricks and contrivances, carried on by the means of paper money, London, Cobbett, 1828; James William Gilbert, The History and Principles of Banking, London, Longman, 1834; and John Wade, History of the Middle and Working Classes with a popular exposition of the economical and political principles which have influenced the past and present condition of the industrious orders, London, Effingham & Wilson, 1833.

by Malthus to be worried about over-population, but primarily Ricardian on political economy. Marx, to be sure, disagreed with Wade's politics, but he found in his History a perspective on English social history which reinforced what he had learned from Engels, and also a systematic approach to contemporary economic problems which firmly related liberal economic theory to the life-experiences of English trade-unionists, unemployed workers and paupers on poor relief. It helped him grasp the connection between the evolution of society and the operation of economic laws.

He went beyond Wade's fairly popular discussion of problems of political economists to several more theoretical treatises on economic theory. He had previously read Smith, Say, Ricardo and some works by Ricardians like James Mill, MacCulloch and Nassau Senior, but except during the last few months in Brussels before his trip to England he had approached them in a highly critical spirit, regarding them as cynical apologists for a decadent social order. Now he read more of these theoreticians' works -- an article by Senior entitled "Political Economy" in the Encyclopaedia Metropolitana, MacCulloch's Principles of Political Economy, and John Stuart Mill's Essays on some unsettled questions of Political Economy (where the Ricardian 'iron law of wages' was subjected to severe modifications). But while he now viewed Ricardian economics more sympathetically, he was still not fully converted, and he investigated too the opinions of rival authorities like Thomas Cooper, William Atkinson and

the leading Physiocrat, François Quesnay.⁵ His knowledge of the contemporary economic literature was gradually becoming more extensive and systematic, yet he was still feeling his way and had not as yet repudiated the broadly Sismondian perspective he had acquired in 1844.

Marx also took the opportunity while in England to collect more English socialist (or, as he preferred to call it, 'communist') literature. Either in Manchester or immediately after returning to Brussels, he took notes on the main works of three so-called Ricardian socialists: William Thompson, J.M. Edmonds, and John Bray. He had previously skimmed Bray's Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy, but now went through it more carefully; actually, the book was more Owenite than Ricardian, as was also the case with Edmonds' Practical, Moral and Political Economy, a fact which Marx duly noted in his exercise books. He found Thompson's Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth more impressive and more Ricardian, taking 81 extracts, but he

5. Nassau W. Senior, "Political Economy", Encyclopaedia Metropolitana, or System of Universal Knowledge, vol IV, London, Clowes, 1836, pp. 129-228; John R. MacCulloch, The Principles of Political Economy, with a sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Science, Edinburgh, Tait, 1825 (Marx used the 2nd. edition, 1830); John Stuart Mill, Essays on some unsettled Questions of Political Economy, London, Parker, 1844; Thomas Cooper, Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy, Columbia, S.C., Sweeny, 1826 (Marx used a 2nd edition, London, 1831); William Atkinson, Principles of Political Economy, or the laws of the Formation of National Wealth, developed by means of the Christian Law of Government, London, Whittaker, 1840; François Quesnay, "Le droit naturel" & "Analyse du tableau économique", in Eugène Daire (ed.), Physiocrates, Paris, Guillaumin, 1846, pp. 41-78.

judged that Thompson's political outlook was a "contradictory combination of Godwin, Owen and Bentham".⁶ Still, his reading of these works was important for the evolution of his views on socialist theory as well as political economy, because he discovered in them the claim that labour, when treated as a commodity, was necessarily exploited, and also concerted arguments for a system of co-operative production in which the value of commodities would be determined not by market forces, but by the amount of labour-power embodied in them. His reaction to the former claim seems to have been that while it was undoubtedly true, the Owenite economists had not proved their point adequately; whereas on the latter question he was emotionally strongly in favour but uneasy about its practicality and theoretical viability. He would return to both problems in 1847 in The Poverty of Philosophy.

Although he had heard about Owenism from Engels and had previously read the odd Owenite pamphlet, the fall of 1845 was the time when Marx really discovered the works of Robert Owen. He went through the four volumes of Owen's The Book of the New Moral World, and also three shorter essays including A New View of Society, or Essays on the Principle

6. John Bray, Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy, or the Age of Might and the Age of Right, Leeds, Green, 1839; T.R. Edmonds, Practical Moral and Political Economy, or, the government, religion, and institutions most conducive to individual happiness and to national power, London, Effingham & Wilson, 1828; William Thompson, An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth most conducive to human happiness, applied to the newly proposed system of voluntary equality of wealth, London, Longman, etc., 1824; Marx, "Exzerptheft", MEGA I, 6, p. 616.

of the Formation of the Human Character, which set out Owen's theory of environmental conditioning.⁷ By chance he happened at the same time on the memoirs of a French civil servant, police archivist and geographer, Jacques Peuchet, whose work, somewhat similar to Owen's in its stress on the social determination of human character, impressed him greatly.⁸ Peuchet, drawing data from the archives in his care, had been a pioneer in the study of social statistics, and was particularly fascinated by the problem of suicide. Like Durkheim decades later, he pointed to the regularity of suicide when viewed at the macro-level. He also stressed the greater incidence of suicide among the lower classes, and the jump in the suicide-rates during hard winters and periods of economic recession. Concluding that poverty was the greatest, though by no means the only, cause of suicide, he demonstrated a close correlation between the number of prostitutes,

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7. Robert Owen, The Book of the New Moral World, 4 vols: vol 1, Manchester, Heywood, 1840; vols 2 & 3, London, Colonization Society, 1842; vol 4, London, Watson, 1844; A New View of Society, or Essays on the Principle of the Formation of the Human Character, and the Application of the Principle to Practice, London, Cadell & Devis, 1813; Six lectures delivered at Manchester previously to the discussion between Mr. R. Owen and the Rev. I.H. Ruchink, Manchester, Heywood, 1837; Lectures on the Marriage of the Priesthood of the Old Immoral World, delivered in the year 1835, before the passing of the new marriage act; with an appendix cont. the marriage system of the New Moral World, Leeds, Hobson, 1840.
 8. Jacques Peuchet, Mémoires tirés des archives de la police de Paris pour servir à l'histoire de la morale et de la police, 6 vols, Paris, Levavasseur & Bourmance, 1832.

thefts and suicide attempts in Paris, all of which fluctuated according to the price of bread. Marx, excited by these revelations, hastened to write an article on the subject for Hess' Gesellschaftsspiegel.⁹ It consisted mainly of extensive quotations from the section of Peuchet's memoir discussing Parisian suicide, interspersed with a few of his own comments. He was particularly struck by Peuchet's point that the high incidence of urban suicide reflected the sense of isolation and loneliness experienced by so many individuals in modern 'commercial' society (an empirical confirmation of one facet of his own theory of alienation), and also by the Frenchman's claim that since suicide was non-existent in some societies, the phenomenon was a product of the structure and values prevalent in modern Europe and could probably be eradicated, but only by a "total reform" of the present social order. Marx also approved of the hard-headed, 'no-nonsense' approach of Peuchet the social scientist, who argued that on social problems like poverty and suicide what was needed was not moralising but factual knowledge. He italicised Peuchet's statement that given the present lamentable state of social research "man seems to be a mystery to man; he can only be blamed, he is not known".¹⁰ Peuchet, he remarked, was like Fourier in his penetrating analysis of

9. Marx, "Peuchet: On Suicide", MECW, 4, pp. 597-612; originally published in German in Gesellschaftsspiegel, vol 2, no. 7 (1846); apparently omitted from MEGA & WERKE.

10. Ibid, loc. cit., p. 603.

the depths beneath the façade of French social life, and indeed the two had achieved a scientific standard unobtained elsewhere, even in England by Owen. Furthermore, these French analysts had been accurate and factual without sacrificing the immediacy and "warmth of life itself", combining in their surveys a "broadness of view, refined subtlety and bold originality of spirit".¹¹ This was an eulogy which Marx had accorded to only one other thinker (Proudhon), and it indicated how highly he evaluated the critical (as opposed to the speculative, utopian) side of contemporary French socialist theory. From the direction Marx's studies were taking in the summer and fall of 1845, it looks as though he already had the idea of synthesising the French socialist critique of bourgeois society with a transmuted and adapted form of English political economy.

Engels already possessed the acquaintance with Ricardian and Owenite economic theories that Marx was acquiring in these months. He had also, during his previous stay in Manchester, amassed a detailed knowledge of English social and economic history, so that Marx was still struggling to catch up with him in this area. On the other hand, he knew considerably less about French history than Marx, who, as we have seen, had studied the French Revolution and its aftermath fairly intensively while living in Paris. Contemplating the idea of expanding his projected social history of

11. Ibid, p. 597.

Britain to include the continental consequences of English industrialisation, Engels set out to fill the gaps in his comprehension of recent European events. While in London he had renewed his post of German correspondent for The Northern Star, and he hoped to make a career in political journalism, sending articles also to German periodicals like the Telegraph für Deutschland, to which he had contributed in the early 1840s. His plan was to combine journalism with his historical studies, so he used the articles he wrote during these months on current events as a vehicle for working out an overall perspective on Europe since 1789.

In Engels' view, the French Revolution, an "event which shook modern society to its very foundations", had been the first phase of a tremendous, Europe-wide, social transformation which was still in its early stages. "The whole European social movement today", he wrote, "is only the second Act of the revolution, only the preparation for the dénouement of the drama which began in Paris in 1789, and now has the whole of Europe for its stage".¹² He saw the democratic/republican movement, the trade-union movement, and the campaign for social reforms as all legitimate heirs of the French revolutionaries, emphasising that it was quite wrong to interpret the Revolution as a purely

12. Engels, "Das Fest der Nationen in London" ("The Festival of Nations in London"), Rheinische Jahrbücher zur gesellschaftlichen Reform, vol 2, 1846, pp. 1-19; reprinted in MEGA I, 4, pp. 455-471; MECW, 6, pp. 3-14 (quotation, MEGA I, 4, p.459; MECW, 6, p. 5).

political affair, a struggle over constitutional forms. On the contrary, it had been a "social movement from beginning to end", and the events of the early 1790s had demonstrated that universal suffrage meant the curtailment of bourgeois, as well as aristocratic, social and economic privileges. In consequence, he was now firmly opposed to those socialists (for example, some of the Owenites and Fourierists), who maintained that the form of government was irrelevant to the "real question" (i.e., the social question), and that Chartism and Republicanism were both side-tracks which the labour movement should avoid. To argue this way, he believed, was to forget the coercive power of a state controlled by the propertied classes, and also to neglect the great use which might be made of the governmental apparatus in transforming capitalism into communism. There was no question in his mind that a communist society would be a republic and a democracy, which was why, he pointed out, the "French Republic matters a great deal to us".¹³

When he thought of the French Revolution in these terms, however, Engels had in mind not so much 1789 as the period of Jacobin rule from June 1793 to July 1794. These were the "great years", he exclaimed, "when a whole people all at once threw aside all cowardice, selfishness and beggarliness, when there were men courageous enough to defy the law, who shrank from nothing and whose iron energy ensured

13. Ibid, loc. cit., MEGA I, 4, pp. 457-458; MECU, 6, pp. 3-4.

that...not a single coward, petty shopkeeper or stockjobber, in short not a single bourgeois dared show his face in the whole of France".¹⁴ Like Marx, he had no compunction about defending the Terror, and his heroes were Danton, Robespierre, St-Just, and Marat. He heartily agreed with the sentiments of his friend Harney who, in a public toast commemorating the establishment of the French Republic, attacked constitutionalists like Lafayette, Girondins like Roland, and even most of the Montagnards, as men who had been opposed to the grand mission of the Revolution, the "destruction of inequality". Robespierre, Harney and Engels agreed, had been an "extraordinary man" who had courageously adopted the methods required to extirpate corruption and injustice, while the "glorious" Babeuf had sought a social republic in which money and private property, the "roots of all wrong and evil", would be abolished.¹⁵ Engels thus believed that the most logical, resolute, and social-minded of the French Revolutionaries had aimed not merely at a republican democracy but also at an egalitarian community, and when he praised the French Revolution he was applauding this vision as much as the destruction of an ancien régime built on hierarchy and privilege.

Marx had portrayed Napoleon in The Holy Family as a legitimate successor to the anti-bourgeois rule of the Committee of Public Safety, and, despite his aversion to Bonaparte's dictatorial methods, had evinced a certain sympathy

14. Ibid, MEGA 1, 4, p. 459; MECW, 6, p. 5.

15. Ibid, MEGA 1, 4, pp. 465-466; MECW, 6, pp. 10-11.

for his policies and achievements. Engels was even more favourable, mainly because he was convinced that the Napoleonic armies had done Germany a great service, hauling it out of the Middle Ages by clearing away the "antediluvian forest of 'Christian-Germanic' society". In Germany, he explained, the energetic Napoleon had been a representative of the Revolution and a propagator of the principles of liberal democracy. Echoing Marx's words, he added that Bonaparte had "applied the reign of terror, which had done its work in France, to other countries, in the shape of war -- and this 'reign of terror' was sadly wanted in Germany". The Napoleonic era had transformed an economically stagnant, morally decaying, and politically fragmented country into a nation, and Napoleon had become a symbol of modernisation and progress. Engels held the German nationalist movement of 1813-15 in utter contempt, and flatly branded the so-called 'national war of liberation' a "piece of idiocy". Napoleon, he insisted, had been a great and exceptional man, and even his ascent of the throne could be excused in the circumstances.¹⁶

This estimate led him to deny the then popular interpretation of the Napoleonic wars as a crusade against Bonapartist despotism and imperialism. In reality, he argued, they had been caused primarily by the legitimist monarchs' horror of liberal and egalitarian Revolution; these

16. Engels, "The State of Germany: I", The Northern Star, no. 415, 25/10/45; reprinted in MEGA I, 4, pp. 480-486; MECW, 6, pp. 15-21 (quotations, MEGA I, 4, pp. 484-485; MECW, 6, pp. 19-20).

rulers had believed that by deposing Napoleon they were expunging from Europe the dragon's teeth of democracy. On the other hand, the English war effort, although begun by a frightened aristocracy, had been sustained by a "moneyocracy" making immense profits from war loans, harassment of mercantile competitors, conquest of South American markets, and the seizure of French, Spanish and Dutch colonies. Britain's war aims had been primarily economic, and she had gained a quasi-monopoly of world trade and the vast markets she required to expand her mechanised textile industry. Engels was arguing, in effect, that the Napoleonic wars were causally linked to the industrial revolution, and that Pitt's policies had gained the support of the British business community because they coincided with its material interests.

On his perspective, the down fall of Napoleon had meant the destruction of the French Revolution, and he emphasised the 'white terror' in Southern France, Spain and Italy, including Peterloo under the same rubric. He saw the Congress of Vienna as essentially a scramble for booty, and an attempt to reimpose the ancien régime throughout continental Europe. The main results of the peace settlement, he suggested, were that Russia had grabbed the best part of Poland, England had further extended her maritime power and gained access to continental markets, and the German nationalists had been cheated by their "so-called friends and allies". Most French-influenced areas of Germany had been purged of their liberal institutions and restored to petty despots, so that Germany after 1815 had presented a picture of "shameless

reaction" under the absolute control of Prussia and Austria. In brief, the Restoration was a period of unmitigated gloom, which had also had the unfortunate result of making backward Prussia the crux of German development -- as he put it, the "battlefield on which the future fate of Germany" would be decided.¹⁷

Thus, in Engels' view, both the Terror and the Napoleonic era were times of progress in European history, the former because it had established the 'social republic', the latter because it had modernised Southern and Central Europe. Napoleon, the inheritor of at least some of the values and methods of the revolutionaries of Year II, had been overthrown by a coalition of legitimist monarchs, feudalistic aristocrats and commercial bourgeoisie, and the immediate result had been the reimposition of upper-class rule on continental Europe. He pointed out that this political dominance had scarcely accorded with the aristocracy's relative social and economic decline. Because of expanding trade and manufacturing the middle classes had been more prosperous than ever, and they had therefore resented their exclusion from power. The blatant neglect of their interests by the governments of the Restoration era had forced them to resume the struggle and to demand once again a liberalisation of

17. Engels, "The State of Germany: II", The Northern Star, no. 417, 8/11/45, and "The State of Germany: III", The Northern Star, no. 438, 4/4/46; reprinted in MEGA I, 4, pp. 486-497; MECW, 6, pp. 21-33 (quotations, MEGA I, 4, pp. 487 & 492; MECW, 6, pp. 22 & 27).

political institutions.¹⁸ In its struggle with the aristocracy after 1815 the liberal 'party' had been aided by a democratic movement, led in the main by intellectuals but supported largely by working people. These workers, though politically "more advanced" than the middle classes, had been as yet unaware of the difference between "liberty of money" and "liberty of man", and had supported middle-class causes like Corn Law Repeal as well as democratic ones like Universal Suffrage. As a political force they had been "more or less subservient" to the bourgeoisie and had served as its troops in the insurrections of 1830 in Paris and the Reform campaign of 1831 in England.¹⁹ The middle classes, however, had never intended to implement the programme of their radical allies; they had aimed at establishing a system of parliamentary government in which only the wealthy were represented, although they also desired to abolish arbitrary privileges and tax-exemptions, and to obtain a jury system, a free press, and genuine elections. Engels claimed that this reform programme was half-hearted, stopping short of real equality and merely replacing hereditary privileges by "the privilege of money". Once again contending that a free press and a jury system benefitted only those with high incomes, he concluded that moderate liberalism was fraudulent because it reinforced the most fundamental inequality, that between rich and poor, which was tantamount to giving "ine-

18. "The State of Germany: III", loc. cit., MEGA I, 4, p. 492; MECW, 6, p. 28.

19. Ibid, loc. cit., MEGA I, 4, pp. 493-494; MECW, 6, p. 29.

quality the name of equality".²⁰

For Engels, then, the period 1815-1830 was dominated by a class struggle between the landed aristocracy (aided by the monarchy) and the rising bourgeoisie (aided by the working classes). But while he believed this was the case throughout Europe, he recognised that the balance of power between contending classes differed greatly from country to country. In Germany, for example, liberalism was weak, and the majority of professionals and businessmen had been tolerably happy with the hybrid form of government imposed on the larger German principalities at the Congress of Vienna. Only in Britain and France had the middle classes been strong enough to effectively challenge the existing order. He saw the Revolution of 1830 in France as the seizure of power by the haute bourgeoisie, aided by the Parisian lower classes, quoted Laffitte as announcing, on the morrow of the insurrection, "Now we, the bankers, will govern", and commented "and they do so, up to this hour".²¹ Indeed 1830 seems to have made a strong impression of Engels. He was certain that the willingness of the Parisian proletariat to fight for the liberal cause had been decisive, and he saw no reason why these same shock troops could not again be mobilised, given the right circumstances, to set up a democratic republic. He thus believed that the way forward in

20. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, p. 493; MECW, 6, pp. 28-29.

21. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 494-496; MECW, 6, pp. 30-31.

France lay through another Parisian journée which would be backed, he assumed, by a majority of politically-aware Frenchmen. But he ignored the problem of the conservative peasantry, for whom he had little time, calling their German counterparts "the most stupid set of people in existence".²²

Yet Engels was also impressed by the alternative, less violent strategy of the English bourgeoisie. In the Reform Bill campaign of 1831, he contended, the middle class had held the potentially insurrectionary masses in reserve as a threat, and had by this means obtained a franchise which restricted the vote to property-owners and prosperous leaseholders. Not that the 1832 Act had given the bourgeoisie more than a share of political power -- in England the struggle with the landed aristocracy was still in progress and had now taken the form of conflict over the Corn Laws. He devoted a fairly lengthy article in the Telegraph für Deutschland to surveying the history of the Corn Laws and the struggle of the Anti-Corn Law League against them.²³ He had been impressed by the powerful campaign for repeal presented by the business community, and expected that it would shortly be successful. He claimed, however, that the Anti-Corn Law League had lost working-class support after the Manchester insurrection of 1842 which, he charged, had been instigated

22. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 494 & 496; MECW, 6, pp. 29 & 31.

23. Engels, "Geschichte der englischen Korngesetze" ("History of the English Corn Laws"), Telegraph für Deutschland, no. 193, December 1845; reprinted in WERKE, 2, pp. 585-590; MECW, 4, pp. 656-661.

but abandoned by local factory-owners. For Engels, 1842 seems to have marked a watershed in English history, as the time when many working-class democrats had begun to see through the hypocrisy of English liberalism and had resolved to conduct their own independent **campaign** for democracy and socialism. He believed, however, that the time was not quite ripe for a successful campaign for universal suffrage, since the first thing on the agenda was still the accession to full political power of the merchants, manufacturers and bankers who largely controlled European economic life. The Repeal of the Corn Laws would signify that in England this had occurred, and would set the stage for a new class struggle -- between the bourgeoisie in power and the democratic working-class movement.²⁴

Engels pointed out that the French Revolution of 1830 and the English Reform Bill campaign of 1831-2 had had their German equivalent in the "new and violent" liberal agitation of 1830-34. Despite some apparent successes in South Germany (as in Baden), this had had meagre results, and had been suppressed by the combined action of Prussia and Austria in 1834. However, the revival of liberalism in Prussia in the early 1840s, and especially its strength among the merchants and manufacturers of the Rhineland and Saxony, had made it appear likely that the German middle classes might soon

24. "The State of Germany: III", loc. cit., MEGA I, 4, p. 494; MECU, 6, p. 29.

achieve what their French and English counterparts had obtained in the early 1830s. Engels was still hopeful that this would be the case, but a lot less sanguine than he had been even six months before. He was afraid that the Rhenish bourgeoisie's apparent back-tracking on 'the social question' meant that they would fail to press their political demands too. Developments in Saxony would provide a test case of the way the wind was blowing, he suggested in an article in The Northern Star about the Saxon government's use of Prussian troops to suppress a popular demonstration in Leipzig.²⁵ Noting that there was widespread and bitter indignation in Saxony about the Leipzig events, he added ruefully that this was a part of Germany which had "always evinced an inclination for talking when action was sadly wanted". On balance, he still had little faith in the revolutionary quality of the timid and étatiste German bourgeoisie.²⁶

Nonetheless, if it was unwise to count on the middle classes -- even on the small minority of middle-class German youths sympathetic to republicanism and socialism -- this did not entail in Engels' view that the liberal revolution would be indefinitely postponed. He apparently had little doubt that a "glorious revolution" would break out within a decade, but he expected that the leaders of the insurrection

25. Engels, "The Late Butchery at Leipzig -- The German Working Men's Movement", The Northern Star, no. 409, 13/9/45; reprinted in MEGA I, 4, pp. 475-477; MECW, 4, pp. 645-648.

26. Ibid, loc. cit., MEGA I, 4, pp. 475-476; MECW, 4, p. 646.

would be found not among the middle classes but in the ranks of the labour movement which had recently developed with "astonishing rapidity". In a year or two's time, he asserted, the campaign for a republic based on universal suffrage would be able to muster a "glorious array" of working-class democrats, and as evidence he cited the growing labour unrest since the Silesian weavers' revolt of 1844. Recent laws prohibiting combinations had provoked numerous strikes and riots, for example by railway and textile workers in Bohemia, Saxony and Berlin, and trade-unionism was making considerable progress, so that one could truthfully state that the German working classes now possessed a "knife and fork movement" of their own which would likely develop along English lines.²⁷ He thus concluded that the German revolution, although political in form and liberal-democratic in aim, would be sparked by labour unrest, and so would have -- like the French Revolution before it -- a "social meaning".²⁸ He was uncertain quite what would happen (he certainly had no blue-print for 'permanent revolution' or the creation of 'workers' councils') but he anticipated -- and fervently hoped -- that in Germany, as in France, the advent of a democratic republic would open the way to profound social reform. Democracy, he asserted on several occasions, nowadays meant communism (i.e., the one led naturally and

27. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp.476-477; MECU, 4, pp. 647-648.

28. Ibid, MEGA I, 4, pp. 476-477; MECU, 4, p. 647.

"logically" to the other), and he maintained that the leading working-class democrats in Britain, France and Germany had all been converted to communism. He was prompted to make this rather astounding claim in part by the resounding applause which had greeted Harney's proclamation of communist principles at the founding meeting of the Society of Fraternal Democrats, and in part by the speech of Berrier-Fontaine, the French delegate at the meeting, who had assured his audience that the French Republican movement had espoused the goal of universal equality, that communism was "advancing with giant strides throughout France", and that co-operative associations were extending "all over" the country.²⁹ Engels was sure, too, that the French labour movement was growing in strength, numbers and determination. In an article in The Northern Star he recorded the existence of a prolonged and bitter carpenters' strike in Paris, and commented that the affair had done "a tremendous deal of good" to the French working-class movement.³⁰ Irrefutable evidence was accumulating, he felt sure, that throughout Western and Central Europe a movement for drastic change was arising in the "lower depths" of society. The upper classes and the bourgeoisie were too busy squabbling among themselves, he judged,

29. "Das Fest der Nationen in London", loc. cit., MEGA I, 4, p. 478; MECU, 6, n. 13.

30. Engels, "Victoria's Visit -- The Condemnation of the Paris Carpenters", The Northern Star, no. 410, 26/9/45; reprinted in MEGA I, 4, pp. 478-479; MECU, 4, pp. 649-650.

to see the danger before it was too late. He thus felt confirmed in the opinion he had stated in the last chapter of The Condition of the Working Classes in England: a social transformation could be effected through a series of gradual political and economic reforms, but it was increasingly unlikely that violent revolution would in fact be avoided on the Continent.

Back in Brussels in the winter of 1845-46, Marx and Engels worked together on two major projects. One, the creation of an international Communist Correspondence Committee linking communists in Germany, France and Britain later induced them to attempt to re-establish contacts with several of the French socialists and communists they had met in Paris: Proudhon, Blanc, Leroux, and also (probably for the first time) Cabet. This scheme, however, hardly got under way before the spring of 1846. Before then the two men drafted the better part of a manuscript, (which, in the event, remained unpublished), designed as a two-volume book entitled The German Ideology.³¹ In the course of this work, they again outlined their current views on the main varieties of French socialism.

Their decision to collaborate on The German Ideology was prompted by mutual irritation at the poor quality, arrogance, and nebulous character of contemporary German socialist writing in newly created periodicals like the Rheinische

31. Marx & Engels, Die deutsche Ideologie, MEGA I, 5, pp. 1-528; MECU, 5, pp. 19-539.

Jahrbücher and the Deutsches Bürgerbuch. A school of German socialism, usually called 'true socialism', had crystallised around these reviews, and had pretensions to the intellectual leadership of the German 'left'. Marx and Engels judged the productions of this school much inferior to the writings of French and English socialists, and objected to the hostile tone adopted by many 'true socialist' writers towards Fourier, Cabet, Owen, and other non-German theorists. A defence of French communism was called for, they decided, against the 'true socialists' and against other 'advanced' German intellectuals like Bruno Bauer, Feuerbach, and especially Max Stirner, whose influence they thought particularly nefarious. Like The Holy Family, The German Ideology was planned as a polemic, but once they began writing its authors decided to include an expose of the new theory of history which they had both been working out -- initially independently, but from the spring of 1845 onward, jointly -- during the last year or so. Consequently the text of The German Ideology combined two main themes: an apologia for the best French socialist writing, and a fragmentary statement of the 'materialist theory of history'. The link between the two was causal. Marx and Engels had derived many of the ideas and insights they incorporated in the latter theory from the French writers they defended en passant.

One initial difficulty posed by The German Ideology is that of authorship. Most of the manuscript is in Engels' handwriting, (often with marginal comments in Marx's hand),

and since he composed more easily than Marx it is tempting to assume that he wrote down the fruits of their discussions.³² But there are three reasons for doubting that this was in fact the case: Marx's handwriting was particularly illegible, and he normally had recourse to having other people make a clean copy of his manuscripts for submission to the printers; Marx published as his own work a book-review of Karl Grün's Die soziale Bewegung in Frankreich und Belgien,³³ the text of which had previously (in Engels' hand) formed Chapter Four of Volume Two of the book; and thirdly -- and to my mind most conclusively -- there are noticeable differences of style between different sections of the work. On the basis of style and subject-matter, I would suggest that Marx wrote rather more than half of the well-known Part I of the book "On Feuerbach", virtually the whole of the extremely lengthy and tedious attack on Max Stirner which formed most of Part II, and also most (except the Introduction) of the second volume on 'true socialism'. I therefore presume it was predominantly Marx's work, and in the following discussion I shall ascribe the ideas to Marx except where I believe particular sections to have been written by Engels, or where I am describing general positions held jointly.

32. For details on handwriting in the manuscript, see MEGA I, 5, pp. 564-565.

33. Marx, "Karl Grün: Die soziale Bewegung in Frankreich und Belgien (Darmstadt, 1845), oder: die Geschichtsschreibung des wahren Sozialismus" ("Karl Grün: Die soziale Bewegung in Frankreich und Belgien (Darmstadt, 1845), or, the Historiography of True Socialism"), Westphälische Dampfboot, August 1847; reprinted in MEGA I, 5, pp. 471-516 as part of Die deutsche Ideologie; MECW, 5, pp. 484-530.

The most valuable and original insight in The German Ideology, the 'materialist theory of history', was not worked out systematically. Presented mainly in Part I, it remained a jumbled collection of assertions about the structure of society, the motors of historical change, and the relationship between ideas, volitions and reality. The reader was left the task of assembling these into a coherent theory. Hence, in order to grasp what Marx was trying to express, it is useful to note some of the elements which he was synthesising. I have already mentioned his probable debts to the books he found in Manchester, in particular those by Sadler and Wade, and indicated his sympathy for the ideas of Peuchet and Owen on the social conditioning of the individual character. He usually steered clear of thoroughgoing determinism, but he was clearly very conscious -- as had been Peuchet and Owen -- of the power of the environment (natural and social) -- to mould human behaviour. In several celebrated passages he emphasised the role played by material factors in shaping men's goals and ideas; as he put it, "consciousness was from the very beginning a social product".³⁴ If, in his view, men were not totally determined by their 'conditions of life', they were at least heavily conditioned by them. He mentioned Owen's notion of environmental conditioning several times in The German Ideology, and while he repudiated Owen's simplistic assumption of a direct causal relationship between matter and mind, he nevertheless probably derived the general framework of his

34. Die deutsche Ideologie, MEGA I, 5, p. 20; MECW, 5, p. 44.

explanation of human behaviour from Owen.³⁵ This debt to Owen and Peuchet is not one which can be documented in detail, and possibly the English socialist and French social scientist only enhanced the appeal of the positivist and materialist approach to human behaviour that Marx had found earlier in philosophes like Helvetius. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to conclude that reading Peuchet and Owen just before writing the book reinforced Marx's sense that men were often the pawns of large-scale socio-economic forces.

He had encouraged Engels to read Sismondi, and there are good grounds for supposing that the Swiss economist had a considerable influence not only on his economic views but also on the formation of the 'materialist theory of history'. Sismondi, as Engels noted in The German Ideology, had argued that a key feature of modern capitalist society was that industry took on a life of its own, developing productive capacity independently of human requirements, and he suggested that this was the fundamental cause of recurrent economic crises which reflected an imbalance between production and consumption. Engels took up this idea, and combined it with the concept of dehumanisation to explain the lack of freedom experienced by the human cogs in the new industrial machine. Sismondi and Cherbuliez, he wrote, had demonstrated the increasing 'opposition' between capital and labour which accompanied the growth of a complex division of labour. They

35. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 372 & 399; MECW, 5, pp. 393 & 421.

had revealed, first, that "the productive forces appear as a world for themselves, quite independent of and divorced from individuals", and, secondly, that "standing against these productive forces, we have the majority of the individuals from whom these forces have been wrested away", and whose labour, "robbed of all real life-content...has lost all semblance of self-activity and only sustains their life by stunting it".³⁶ In this statement we find both one of the central insights of the Marxian theory of history and also its link with the basically a-historical Paris Manuscripts. The point that Marx and Engels wanted to make was that with the development of commercial, and especially industrial, capitalism, men had progressively lost control of the most fundamental factor determining the evolution of society, and that socio-economic forces had been let loose which now imposed tremendous constraints on the way they lived their lives. This was not to deny that "men made history", but it was to emphasise that, increasingly, they did so under circumstances beyond their individual power to modify. Modern life, remarked Marx, was lived under "external compulsion", i.e., under the continual and restrictive pressure of economic laws and "natural conditions" which severely restricted human freedom in practice.³⁷ Marx and Engels apparently saw men not so much determined by economic developments as greatly hampered and coerced by them.

36. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, p. 56-57; MECW, 5, pp. 86-87.

37. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 10-17 & 26-28; MECW, 5, pp. 31-38 & 50-54.

This sense of the productive forces as -- under capitalism -- alien monsters beyond human control, was far from Saint-Simon's optimistic glorification of industrial development. Yet Saint-Simon, too, seems to have been a significant source for some aspects of the Marxian theory of history. Although Marx had read the main works of the Saint-Simonian school in Paris, it was apparently only in Brussels that he carefully studied Saint-Simon's own writings, going through the Rodrigues edition of his Oeuvres.³⁸ His detailed knowledge of essays like the Lettres d'un habitant de Geneve and the Catechisme politique d'un industriel is evident in Volume 2 of The German Ideology.³⁹ He probably derived from Saint-Simon his new emphasis on 'production' as the fundamental human activity, and also the hypothesis that different modes of organisation of the productive forces formed the basis of successive social regimes. Saint-Simon's general conception of social reality and the methodology appropriate for grasping this was also congenial to Marx -- it was positivist, but non-determinist since he viewed freedom as something which men had to carve out by creatively

38. Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon, Oeuvres de Saint-Simon, précédées de fragmens de l'histoire de sa vie écrite par lui-même (ed. Olinde Rodrigues), Paris, Capelle, 1841. This collection consisted of: Vie de Saint-Simon, Catéchisme politique des industriels, Vues sur la propriété et la législation, Lettres d'un habitant de Geneve à ses contemporains, Parabole de Saint-Simon, Nouveau Christianisme & Olinde Rodrigues aux Saint-Simoniens.

39. Die deutsch Ideologie, MEGA I, 5, pp. 483-489; MECU, 5, pp. 498-504.

modifying their institutions and environment.⁴⁰ This perspective was an antidote to the behaviouristic determinism of Owen and Peuchet, and was close to Marx's epistemological stance in the Theses on Feuerbach.

Proudhon also appears to have influenced the methodology of the work. While members of the Young Hegelian movement in Berlin, Marx and Engels had picked up the Hegelian notion of dialectical progress. Neither of them had employed the idea in their subsequent writings, however, and Engels apparently had abandoned his adherence to the Hegelian method when he became converted to English empiricism. Marx, too, had forsaken the dialectic in 1842-43 as he became more and more critical of the Hegelian theory of the state and Hegelian philosophy in general. The short section he devoted in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts to Hegel had been significant in two respects -- it had indicated that he viewed the dialectic as part and parcel of the speculative, metaphysical method which Hegel had 'perfected' and which he, Marx, now categorically repudiated, and secondly, it had shown that while he was beginning to see the need for a historical approach to human society (as opposed to Feuerbach's a-historical 'anthropology'), he was not inclined to rehabilitate Hegel's dialectical philosophy of history, which he condemned as teleological and fraudulent.⁴¹ There was no

40. George Gurvitch, "Saint-Simon et Karl Marx", Revue internationale de philosophie, vol XIV (1960), pp.399-416.

41. Marx, "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte", MEGA I, 3, pp. 150-172; MECW, 3, pp. 326-346.

favourable reference to the dialectical method in either The Condition of the English Working Classes or The Holy Family, nor was there anything in these works from which it might be inferred that their authors believed they had employed such a method. Indeed, in The Holy Family Marx, despite his eulogies of Qu'est-ce que la propriété?, pointedly ignored Proudhon's De la création de l'ordre, in which the French socialist tried to work out his own dialectical method (derived in part from Fourier's séries and in part from his second-hand knowledge of Hegel) and to apply it to European society. One suspects that Marx at this time agreed with Ruge's judgement that De la création was a pretentious and amorphous disaster (an opinion which, incidentally, Proudhon himself came to share.)⁴² But by the time he wrote Volume 2 of The German Ideology, Marx had revised his opinion drastically. "The most important thing in Proudhon's book De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité", he remarked,

is his dialectique sérielle, the attempt to establish a method of thought in which the process of thinking is substituted for individual thoughts. Proudhon is looking, from the French standpoint, for a dialectic method such as Hegel has indeed given us.⁴³

He still thought both Proudhon's and Hegel's dialectics were flawed and required sharp criticism, but he had now decided that the idea of a dialectical method was worth pursuing after all. It appears that after demolishing to his

42. Ruge to Marx, 11/8/43; MEGA I, 1 (2), pp. 313-314.

43. Die deutsche Ideologie, MEGA I, 5, p. 515; MECW, 5, p. 530.

own satisfaction the speculative approach of German philosophers, and flirting with a deterministic, positivist scientism rooted in eighteenth-century materialism, Marx -- in line with the Theses on Feuerbach -- had somewhat reluctantly decided that he needed to complement his pragmatic epistemology with an explicit methodology avoiding determinism, and that this was to be found, after all, in the pursuit of a 'dialectical' approach to social reality. One thing he had liked in Proudhon's mémoire was his heavy use of the concept of 'contradictions' in the status quo (e.g., between private ownership and distributive justice) compelling fundamental social change. He adopted this theory that progress resulted from the clash of 'contradictory' or 'antagonistic' forces in The German Ideology, and went as far as to suggest that all substantial social change resulted from conflicts between 'forces of production' and incompatible 'modes of social intercourse'.⁴⁴ Marx's theory of history was thus 'dialectical' in the limited sense that he saw societies as evolving as a result of internal conflicts and disequilibria. It seems reasonable to conclude that he took from Proudhon this idea of looking for structural 'contradictions' between economy and society as the motors of change.

The other French socialist to whom the materialist theory of history was substantially indebted was Fourier. We have already seen how greatly both Marx and Engels admired

44. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, p. 63; MECW, 5, p. 74.

his critique of bourgeois society, not merely because they agreed with his value-judgments but because they considered his detailed analyses masterful. Fourier, they believed, captured the essence of French social life because he always penetrated to the economic realities which underly social behaviour. Furthermore, he combined this with a historical perspective which focussed on changes in economic organisation and technology. Marx summed up his explanation of the high quality of Fourier's social criticism in the telling phrase: "Fourier...always proceeds from the transformation of production".⁴⁵ It would be an exaggeration to say that Marx and Engels found their approach to history ready-made in Fourier's works, but one can hardly deny that Fourier provided them with a vital clue.

Yet another aspect of the materialist theory of history which Marx and Engels derived from the French was the idea that modern history was a succession of class struggles. This idea was already widely disseminated in the mid-1840s, so it is difficult to pin down to whom precisely Marx and Engels were indebted. Indeed, Marx never claimed to be the author of the 'class-struggle theory of history', and once pointed out that it had been employed before him and Engels by French bourgeois historians like Guizot and Thierry.⁴⁶

45. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, p. 498; MECW, 5, p. 513.

46. Marx to J. Weydemeyer, 5/3/52; WERKE, 28, pp. 503-509; SC, pp. 67-70.

Since he cited Guizot's Histoire de la civilisation en France in The German Ideology, one may infer that his familiarity with Guizot's picture of the rise of the French bourgeoisie before 1789 contributed to the genesis of the 'materialist conception of history'.⁴⁷ However, this interpretation of the French Revolution as the accession to social and political power of the middle class was also to be found in French socialist works on the Revolution which he probably read before Guizot -- it was, in fact, the common intellectual property of Leroux, Blanc, Buchez and Cabet, among others. Moreover, the general idea of class conflict as the primary motor of historical change was equally widespread, and Marx could scarcely have avoided noticing it in the writings of the Saint-simonians, Fourierists and Babouvian communists. As suggested earlier, he probably in fact picked up the notion from his very first French socialist contacts in Paris: Leroux, Blanc, and Considérant.

These, then, were some of the main inputs from French and English socialists incorporated by Marx and Engels into their first formulation of the marxist theory of history in the part of The German Ideology entitled "On Feuerbach". Since this section of the book is relatively well-known, I shall not describe it in detail. However, there has been considerable debate about how to interpret Marx's general theory of historical change, and a few comments about the

47. Die deutsche Ideologie, MEGA I, 5, p. 199; MECW, 5, p. 220.

version in The German Ideology may serve to clarify the issue. There is no question that by this stage in their mental evolutions, both Engels and Marx had a very strong awareness of the impact of economic factors, and especially advances in technology, on other areas of human activity, including politics and thought. It is also evident that they considered their theory of history 'scientific' in the positivist sense of this ambiguous word. Nevertheless, the text of The German Ideology indicates that, on balance, in 1845-46, they embraced neither technological nor even economic determinism, although they were not consistent in this rejection of determinism.⁴⁸

One reason for not interpreting the 'materialist conception' as a species of economic determinism is apparent when one considers Marx's and Engels' statements on the fundamental nature of the historical process. They conceived history as, at bottom, a process of continual interaction between three independent variables: natural environment, society, and individual men, and defended the inclusion of the second factor on the grounds that since society had emerged as an autonomous force so early in human development it was only realistic to treat it as a separate element.

48. Ibid, MECA I, 5, pp. 7-67; MECW, 5, pp. 27-93. An extended exposition of the traditional (economic determinist) account of the Marxian theory of history may be found in Bober, op. cit. Other works on both sides of the scholarly debate are listed in footnotes 62 & 63 of my Introduction; see this Introduction for a brief discussion of rival interpretations.

Following Guen, they recognised the powerful influence of natural and social environments on individual lives, but they stressed equally the transformation of nature by man, and the rethinking of human values and goals by individuals. Human activity, remarked Marx, had two aspects: "the reshaping of nature by men", and the "reshaping of men by men".⁴⁹

The main focus of The German Ideology was on the interaction of variables two and three -- the social organism and the individual human beings who composed it -- but before analysing the dynamics of this relationship, Marx, in the footsteps of Rousseau, attempted to explain how society had been created in the first place. In an account which in its stress on language echoed Rousseau's Discourse on Inequality, he suggested that society had emerged in several stages. The foundation of all human society, he maintained, was production to satisfy basic needs of food, clothing, warmth and shelter; from these developed new needs more difficult to satisfy individually, leading to the formation of the family as the first social relationship; the poverty and inefficiency of totally self-sufficient families stimulated the development of a simple mode of co-operation with others in tribal and primitive communal societies, leading in turn to the emergence of language and 'social consciousness'; these facilitated the growth of divisions of labour, especi-

49. Ibid, MECU, 5, p. 50. This passage was apparently omitted from MEGA, which excluded some fragments of manuscript not integrated by Marx and Engels into the main body of the text. Different arrangements of the text are given in MEGA & MECU.

ally that between mental and material labour, by which time (Marx estimated) there was no question that a primitive form of society was in existence. Production, the family, language, and the division of labour were therefore in his view the most fundamental aspects of human social activity.⁵⁰

This description of the genesis of society was, however, merely a prolegomena to his main interest, that of proving the relationship between the social structure and the causes of change. He maintained that western society since the middle Ages at least had exhibited a three-tier structure consisting of (i) the 'productive forces', (ii) the 'mode of intercourse', and (iii) the 'sphere of consciousness', and that the history of western Europe was best understood as the result of an ongoing interaction between these three facets. Under the label of 'productive forces' he included both material factors -- the level of technology and the availability of raw materials -- and what he called 'the mode of social co-operation', i.e., the methods by which food and other commodities were produced. By the 'mode of intercourse' he meant, on one hand, the social structure (i.e., the system of caste, class, status, or other form of social hierarchy), and, on the other, the system of distribution of the goods produced (i.e., the income structure, the prevalence of private and communal property, and the network of trade). He also divided 'consciousness' into two categories:

50. *Ibid*, MEGA I, 5, pp.11-15 & 19-22; MECW, 5, pp. 31-35 & 43-47.

institutions, which he regarded as functioning as bulwarks of the status quo (e.g., the legal system, religion, and the system of government), and ideologies potentially more independent of the immediate interests of social groups (e.g., science, philosophy, and art). His basic model of society therefore consisted of six layers, grouped into three sets of two.⁵¹

It should be noted, as a second reason for discarding the economic determinist interpretation, that the first tier (the 'productive forces') was not narrowly economic since it included the 'mode of social co-operation', and that the second level (the 'mode of social intercourse') included important aspects of the economy. Marx did, to be sure, emphasise production as the dominant factor in the history of a given epoch, and he certainly conceived of the 'productive forces' as a base on which were erected social and ideological superstructures. And, of course, he developed in The German Ideology the theory of ideology which saw ideas as ultimately reflections of material class interests. But he nonetheless viewed each of the three main facets of society as evolving quasi-independently, each influencing the movement of the others.⁵²

Marx and Engels had only just arrived at the idea of dividing the social organism into six facets and examining

51. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 15-28 & 51-54; MECW, 5, pp. 35-54 & 89-93.

52. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 21, 63 & 54-58; MECW, 5, pp. 45, 74 & 82-86.

their interaction in order to see how the whole functioned and evolved. Consequently they only sketched their new theory, and neither worked it out in detail nor adequately clarified its main ideas. They were still vague on the crucial question of what kind of causal relationships existed between the 'base' of social life. Their formulations regarding the 'productive forces' were ultimately more fundamental than the social and ideological superstructures, nor they conceived of both 'consciousness' and the 'mode of intercourse' as affecting the development of the techniques and instruments of production used in agriculture and industry. In this sense their theory was thoroughly ambiguous, and it is not surprising that it has given rise to controversy. In the event, neither Marx nor Engels was ever to provide a more subtle or consistent account of the 'materialist conception' than that he is here a ideology, and, as Engels' late letter indicates, they quarrelled for the rest of their lives over the exact nature of the base/superstructure relation. My impression is that from the first to the last they desired to maintain only that the 'productive forces' were "in the last analysis" dominant, and that there existed a reciprocal causal relationship between all levels of the social organism. While normally prepared to argue that, on a sophisticated 'dialectical' approach to social phenomena, there was no contradiction between these propositions, they occasionally lost the courage of their convictions and lapsed into a mono-causal, determinist version, as, for example, in Marx's "Preface" to

A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.⁵³ These lapses, if lapses they were, have provided the evidence for those marxists and critics who subsequently attributed to them a 'monist' theory of history.

Nonetheless, while there is enough evidence to indicate that the 'materialist conception' was not in 1845-46 construed by its authors as a statement of simple economic determinism, it is necessary to remember the context in which the theory was drafted. The German Ideology, like its predecessor The Holy Family, was conceived in part as a critique of Hegelian historiography and Young Hegelian philosophy as abstract and arbitrary, to which was added a new attack on Feuerbach's materialism as a-historical. In opposition to these fashionable German intellectual trends, Marx again proclaimed the redundancy of metaphysical philosophy, remarking that "where speculation ends, where real life starts, there consequently begins real, positive science".⁵⁴ Thus, directed at a German literary and philosophical audience, the book was a plea for an empirical, factual, verifiable social and economic history, and the 'materialist conception of history' was an attempt to state in general terms the methodological premisses of an empiricist historiography which would go beyond the mere cataloguing of data. It was a manifesto for 'scientific' as opposed to 'literary' or 'philosophical' history, and, as such, one of many mid-nineteenth century essays

53. Marx, "Vorwort", Zur Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie, Berlin, Drucker, 1859; reprinted in WERKE, 13, pp. 7-11.

54. Die deutsche Ideologie, MEGA I, 5, p. 16; MCCU, 5, p. 37.

expounding the same programme.

In order to illustrate what they meant by "positive science" (their phrase), the authors of The German Ideology sketched the course of European social and economic history from early tribal society through feudalism and the growth of commercial capitalism to modern industrial society.⁵⁵ This sketch, mainly the work of Engels, suggested a six-stage periodisation (seven, if one includes the projected stage of communism expected to commence in the near future), which seems to have been indebted to Fourier and the Saint-Simonians. The six phases in the evolution of European society so far were (i) tribal society; (ii) ancient communal society; (iii) feudalism; (iv) a post-feudal period centred on the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, labelled variously 'the estates system' or 'early civil society' and roughly synonymous with mercantile capitalism; (v) the commercial capitalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, during which period early manufacturing industry became firmly established; and (vi) industrial capitalism, called by Engels the "third form of private property". Marx and Engels considered each of these stages to be substantially more complex, economically and socially, than the preceding one, and suggested that the most significant general characteristic of the evolution of western society was an increasing division of labour. For example, the disintegration of feudal society had been marked

55. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 11-13, 26-29 & 39-50; MECU, 5, pp. 32-35, 50-54 & 63-74.

by the demise of the guild system, a sharper division between town and country, the growth of vagabondage on a large scale, and a qualitative increase in trade. Engels saw the fourth phase as characterised both by commercial conflicts between states which stimulated the growth of national consciousness, and by the initial rise of the bourgeoisie. Re-creating material from his earlier articles and The Condition of the English Working Classes, he gave a fairly detailed picture of the development of manufacturing industry between the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, which, he suggested, had led ultimately to a split between commerce and industry, a new form of the division of labour. He emphasised as the main features of industrial capitalism the divorce between labour and capital-ownership, the alienation of labour, the centralisation of capital, the growth of large-scale factory industry, urbanisation, the emergence of a two-class society, the demise of the independent state, and the decline of national differences.⁵⁶

The theory of ideology offered in The German Ideology was regarded by its authors as a 'scientific' breakthrough, but it suffered from the same fundamental ambiguity as the 'materialist conception'. The central insight was the recognition that the creation of ideas was interwoven with men's material behaviour, or, as Marx succinctly put it, that everyday life determined consciousness. He combined this idea with

56. Ibid, MECW I, 5, pp.39-50; MECW, 5, pp. 63-74.

the related, more controversial, ones that the dominant beliefs of a society were the product of its ruling class, and that rival theories expressed the interests of opposing social groups. He postulated a close connection between the history of ideas and the history of class conflict, and claimed that the apparent independence and objectivity of legal codes, political theories, philosophical systems, and artistic productions was illusory. He did not deny that these ideologies contained some truth, but suggested that they were distorting mirrors of social reality, so many forms of 'false consciousness' in harmony with the vested interests of the ruling groups who sponsored them. As a former law student he was fascinated by the history of changing legal codes, and took delight in pointing out how the law was often a rationalisation for entrenched social customs or, alternatively, for new patterns of economic behaviour. He cited variations in the law on primogeniture and in the rules concerning property entails as examples of how laws were modified to accommodate changes in ownership of private property and patterns of commerce. On the other hand, he recognised that the state had achieved a considerable autonomy after the breakdown of feudal society, and had become an independent force in the evolution of Europe. But he believed that bourgeois financial control of modern government was now transforming the old, independent bureaucracy into a coercive instrument of merchants and manufacturers.⁵⁷

57. *Ibid.*, MEGA I, 5, pp. 15-16 & 35-37; MECW, 5, pp. 36-37, 59-60 & 92-93.

Acknowledging that the link between society and ideas was looser, Marx usually concentrated on proving that connections did exist. His favourite examples of thought-systems as apologies for the status quo were neo-Hegelian philosophy and classical political economy, but in his polemic against Stirner he also tried to show how hierocratic theory was an intellectual expression of the structure of feudal society, and how the 'amorality' of empiricist political theory from Machiavelli to Hobbes reflected the increasing political power of property owners as against the Church.⁵⁸ His most extended essay in the sociology of knowledge was a sketch of the development of utilitarianism from Hobbes and Locke, through the Physicocrats and philosophes like Helvetius and Holbach, to Godwin, Bentham, and James Mill. He concluded that in the hands of the Philosophical Radicals the doctrine had turned into a mere apologia for the status quo, an attempt to prove that "the mutual relations of people today are the most advantageous and generally useful".⁵⁹ So even if ambiguities remained, Marx at least provided a fair number of illustrations of his theory of ideology. Precisely because his polemics with Feuerbach and Stirner led him to 'flesh out' his abstract general formulations with concrete examples, this was one of the more stimulating and original aspects of the 'materialist conception'.

58. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp.158 & 330; MECW, 5, pp. 176 & 322.

59. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 387-392; MECW, 5, pp. 409-414.

Unfortunately he left his account of the mechanism of historical change in a more fragmented form. Essentially, he was trying to marry a stage theory of history with a picture of society as periodically transformed by class warfare. He asserted bluntly that revolutions were the driving force of history, and there is little doubt that he viewed 1789 and 1830 as times of intense class conflict when power had been transferred from one social group to another. His difficulty lay in blending this perspective with the evolutionary interpretation of European history blocked out by Engels and also suggested by his own stress on production as the key human activity. When thinking along these lines Marx viewed history as a succession of generations using and gradually modifying the productive forces and traditional methods handed down to them. He attempted, although not very systematically, to demonstrate that these alternative ways of viewing the past were complementary. In fact, he argued, revolutionary political change had to be explained in terms of the uneven evolution of 'productive forces' and 'modes of intercourse': a 'contradiction' arose between these two levels of the social structure when the distribution of income and mode of property ownership had become inappropriate to the technology and organisational techniques employed in agriculture and manufacturing, and it normally found expression in the form of class conflict.

This conceptual leap from tensions in the social structure to class warfare was the heart of Marx's hypothesis concerning the motor of historical development. But why should

the 'contradictions' produce class conflict? Because, he replied, there was normally a close correspondence between a type of economic organisation and the rule of a particular social group benefitting from it, and each qualitative advance in the economy therefore brought the advent to power of a new class. However, he accepted that this correspondence was imperfect, and also felt obliged to admit that class conflicts sometimes arose in severe form before the 'contradiction' had become acute. While he was convinced that a causal link did exist between political upheavals and the social tensions caused by economic progress, he was unable to formulate a precise 'law' governing them.⁶⁰

The vagueness that marred this explanation stemmed in part from Marx's sense of the complexity of history. We have already seen that he conceived progress as resulting from the interplay of six relatively independent variables, even though he weighted two of these (technology and the organisation of labour) more heavily than the others. He was well aware of the impact of ideas on politics (witness his concern with socialist theory and the need for worker education), and noted that 'consciousness' tended to outstrip material progress, i.e., thinkers frequently anticipated in theory developments which would become practical decades or even centuries later. He recognised the power of exceptional individuals to modify the course of history for decades -- the examples of Robespierre and Napoleon came

60. Ibid, MEGA 1, 5, pp. 10-67; MECW, 5, pp. 32-87.

quickly to mind -- and also that industries and geographical regions advanced unevenly, so that each nation-state was far from homogeneous economically and socially. Factors like these, he suggested, complicated or 'skewed' the political development of a country and explained, for example, the differences between England and France.⁶¹

Certain that their new theory of history was correct at least in its main lines, Marx and Engels believed they could predict the advent of a 'mode of social intercourse' better adapted to the new steam-powered industries and their adjacent communities of factory workers. The visions and arguments of Fourier, the Saint-Simonians and the French communists had reinforced their Romantic faith that a communitarian society was the ideal, indeed the only, means of ensuring the self-enhancement of creative and versatile human beings. Robert Owen's description of community life endowed with modern amenities made possible by gas and steam-power had assured them that communism was feasible in practice in the new industrial world. Convinced both of the morality and of the practicality of their desires, Marx and Engels assumed, rashly, that the new society being created by industrialisation would be sure to implement them. On several occasions in The German Ideology they alluded to what they expected would be its main features.

There were three facets to their vision of communism: economic, political/legal, and ethical. The moral ideal which

61. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 49-50; MECU, 5, pp. 72-74.

underlay it was a combination of egalitarianism and libertarianism, drawing on the legacy of earlier artisan communism and Fourierism, and endeavouring to fuse them. Work and leisure in communist society would be along the lines projected by Fourier -- working hours would be cut sharply, but, more important, work would be enjoyable. The individual would be free to undertake a variety of tasks that appealed to him, and would no longer be chained to one special competence. Marx and Engels asserted categorically that in order to overcome alienation in labour it was imperative to abolish not only economic exploitation of the worker by the owners of capital, not only the authoritarian boss/employee relationship, but also the division of labour itself. They were convinced, in fact, that overcoming the division of labour would be one of the crucial -- if not the crucial -- achievements of communism, because only then could work become a free, creative "self-activity".⁶²

They recognised that before this long-term goal could be reached, certain political and economic changes had to occur. They both now accepted that the coercive modern state would have to be dismantled because there could be no freedom if communes were subject to continual interference from an army of authoritarian bureaucrats. Here they were echoing the anti-étatiste sentiment in French socialism, and they had

62. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, p. 22; MECW, 5, p. 47.

little to add in the way of concrete suggestions about the political make-up of a decentralised society. They did not, it appears, envisage a total abolition of politics, as Saint-Simon and Proudhon at their most extreme had postulated. They remained republican democrats, assuming that the future society would be a parliamentary democracy with universal suffrage and, perhaps, annual elections along the lines demanded by the Chartists. In short, they saw no incompatibility whatsoever between communism, decentralisation, and democracy; in fact they believed firmly that each entailed the others.

Another prerequisite, of course, was the abolition of private property and the turning of land and workshops into 'social property'. Actually, Marx and Engels disliked this term, and criticised Leroux, the Saint-Simonians and the German 'true socialists' (among others) for using it in a confusing manner. Concepts like 'ownership' and 'property' would become redundant in communist society, they reasoned, since tools and raw materials would be freely available to all who wished to utilise them, and 'possession' would be vested in the entire working population. They seem to have wanted to avoid the idea that the 'means of production' would belong to the State, but equally they rejected the 'associationist' ideal of individual producers' co-operatives owning their workshops. Communism therefore meant neither state socialism nor the kind of co-operative quasi-capitalism for which Proudhon was soon to become the spokesman. It was something else, not very clearly specified, a system in which the proletarians working in a given branch of industry would themselves control

and administer the buildings, machinery, land and raw materials, while distributing their products gratis to the population at large. They were thus proposing a more radical version of Proudhon's concept of 'possession' in Qu'est-ce que la propriété?⁶³

Marx and Engels also conceived communism as a new form of economic organisation in which voluntary work-teams would cooperate to exploit to the full modern industrial technology. They argued that equality without machinery would be useless because the gross national product of an agrarian society was too small for redistribution of income to alter significantly the life-styles of peasants and artisans, and they were therefore not much interested in schemes for a more egalitarian carve-up of existing property. They believed that only through industrialisation would the wealth of a nation like France rise sufficiently for the principle of equality to be applied meaningfully. Their communism presupposed a high degree of automation and also world trade, and was much closer to Owen's than to Babouvism or Icarianism. Following the Saint-Simonians in their highly positive attitude toward modern technology, they were, in this crucial respect, breaking sharply from the anti-modernisation sentiments of most early French socialists who had echoed the fears of the artisanate.⁶⁴

63. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 57-62, 185-198, 204-205 & 373; MECW, 5, pp. 78-81, 87-88, 205-219, 225-226 & 394.

64. Ibid, MECW, 5, p. 76 (passage apparently omitted from MEGA).

Nevertheless, if a decentralised democracy was their first practical goal, and a planned industrial economy their second, their ultimate aim remained ethical: the full flowering of every man's personality. In The German Ideology, they certainly accepted Fourier's vision of a total liberation of men's creative talents and passions, and their Romantic ideal of self-cultivation remained at the root of their thought. Yet an important change had occurred in their view of human nature. In their early essays, even in the Paris Manuscripts and Engels' articles of the same year, they had looked for a way of restoring man to what he had once been, and had assumed that they knew what he was 'essentially'; now they had abandoned this for a new conception of human nature that was 'existential' (in the sense of denying that there was any human 'essence'). Marx emphasised that men's personalities were the varied products of different personal histories, and to the extent that common features and patterns could be discerned, these reflected the life-style and customs of their society. Men were thus partially -- not completely, as Owen would have it -- the products of social moulding, and 'human nature' would continue to be modified in the future as society evolved. Marx therefore ceased to think of communism as returning man to his 'real' nature; rather, communism would simply provide a different -- and much improved -- kind of social conditioning by which man would be moulded into a superior being.⁶⁵ Industrial 'alienation'

65. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 63-64, 213 & 410; MECW, 5, pp. 78-79, 234 & 432.

now meant simply that the worker was, in the ordinary language sense of the word, dehumanised by monotonous work, authoritarian factory rules, excessive hours, poor diet, slum housing, etc., etc. Although this was what in substance it had meant in the Paris Manuscripts, there it had been weighed down a little with philosophical accretions deriving mainly from Feuerbach. But with Marx's and Engels' repudiation of Feuerbach in The German Ideology these disappeared, and Engels' purely empirical and descriptive approach to social phenomena won out. It was a further indication that the authors of The German Ideology were inclining towards a modified positivism.

This was evident, too, in the concept of 'freedom' espoused in the work. Marx no longer worried about the free-will-determinism issue as he had in his Doctoral Dissertation and the Theses on Feuerbach, because he ceased to approach the problem of freedom from the viewpoint of a philosopher. He now assumed that men had freewill and some capacity for independent, creative, undetermined action; he also assumed that they were largely moulded in character and behaviour by external 'causes' which conditioned what they thought and did. The only problem, he judged, was in deciding what margin of freedom they had in any given society at any given time, i.e., how wide was the range of real options open to them. In general terms, he argued, this question could be reduced to the amount of control man could exercise over the natural environment and over his own social organisation, since these were the two major forces which constrained and conditioned his behaviour. The history of western man, he recognised,

exhibited an erratic but cumulative process of growing human control over nature, scarcity was diminishing, and society was building up a body of scientific knowledge. In this sense freedom was expanding. But with the breakdown of medieval society and the development of early capitalism another process had been set in motion with the opposite result. Individuals were increasingly impotent in the face of impersonal market forces which determined the pattern of their economic (and hence social, political and moral) behaviour; hence material circumstances were becoming dominant and human beings progressively less free. Under capitalism, in short, economic laws snatched away the potential freedom created by advances in technology. Marx inclined to see the latter trend outweighing the former, and concluded that, on balance, man was daily becoming more and more a slave to 'alien powers'. Capitalism was therefore, in his eyes, the major barrier to a tremendous expansion of the margin of human freedom.⁶⁶

He assumed with complete confidence that the economic laws governing a free-market economy could not apply to a planned, money-less, communist economy. He could make this assumption because he was changing his viewpoint on classical political economy. Previously he had assailed liberal economics on ethical grounds as implicitly based on 'egoist' values. Now, employing his theory of ideology, he took a different, more historical approach to Smith, Say, Ricardo

66. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 23-26, 409-410 & 416-418; MECW, 5, pp. 47-53, 431-432 & 438-439.

and others. They were, he still acknowledged, spokesmen for laissez-faire capitalism, but they were not hypocritical apologists as he had alleged in the Paris Manuscripts. Rather, they had described objectively -- and with a large degree of accuracy -- the current workings of the capitalist economic system, and deduced its internal laws of operation. These laws of classical political economy were objective truths, and the fact that, say, MacCulloch's values were abhorrent and that he introduced into his writing excuses for inexcusable capitalist practices made no difference to the correctness of his analyses. The classical economists' real mistake, Marx was beginning to perceive, was to assume that these laws of a capitalist economy were universal laws, applicable to any kind of economy, whereas in fact they were irrelevant to pre-capitalist and post-capitalist economies; restricted to contemporary capitalism, they were penetrating and accurate.

This insight, if insight it was, into the 'historicity' of classical economic theory, allowed Marx to take a much more positive attitude towards the liberal school. His new viewpoint was to be expressed in The Poverty of Philosophy, but certain remarks in The German Ideology already showed him in a state of transition between his old ethical approach to economics and a new quasi-positivist one.⁶⁷ When he and Engels composed Parts 1 and 2 of the book during the winter of

67. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 339-340, 364-366 & 382; MECW, 5, pp. 360-361, 385-388 & 403.

1845-46, Marx was still heavily influenced by and much disposed towards Sismondi, mentioning him more than any other economist, and strongly praising his insights into the development of production independent of consumption, the consequences of the capital/labour split, and the question of proletarian poverty. In Part Two, however, several fragments on economic topics indicated that the liberal school was beginning to have an impact on his thinking, particularly on the questions of wages and profit. For example, in his polemic against Stirner he flatly acknowledged the necessity of profits and the value of the capitalists's personal activity as a businessman. He equally bluntly announced that producers' co-operatives had failed, and would continue to fail, to compete with capitalist firms. In both cases, to be sure, he meant to limit the scope of his remarks to the current economic regime, so he had hardly become a champion of free enterprise, but this was nevertheless a striking change of tone and approach which amounted to an acceptance of industrial capitalism as a useful and necessary transitional regime.

Marx had been reading economists like Ricardo and Nassau Senior on wages, and was making progress towards a revised position of his own on the question. Denouncing the concept of a "just wage", he argued positivistically that the value of labour depended simply on the universal laws of competition, i.e., the supply/demand situation in the marketplace. Wages, he accepted, were in continual fluctuation,

and the activity of the labour movement could affect their upward and downward movement by interfering with supply and demand. Trade unions could, therefore, achieve higher wages through strike action, but he believed they would be unable to impose equality of pay between trades (as Proudhon desired) because trends for equality would be continually disrupted by the impact of machinism. Wage-levels, in brief, were highly volatile, and their only determinants were (a) the subsistence-level requirements of workers, and (b) the state of over-supply or under-supply of labourers, a factor which the unions could sometimes influence. So, despite his reading of Ricardo, he apparently as yet had little sympathy for the latter's theory of wages; indeed, he was still hostile enough to attack him for claiming that "the worker is the owner of everything he needs as a worker".⁶⁸ In short, his ideas on wages were now in a state of flux. He had abandoned his previous formulations in the Paris Manuscripts as the work of an ignorant amateur, he had not yet been converted to a Ricardian line, and he was currently closest to Lauderdale's emphasis on supply and demand as the sole criterion. He had, however, already concluded that Proudhon's approach to the issue in Qu'est-ce que la propriété? was misguided and naively idealistic.

By the time he wrote Volume Two of The German Ideology in the spring/summer of 1846, Marx's opinions on economic

68. Ibid. (quotation, MEGA I, 5, p. 382; MECW, 5, p. 403).

questions had evolved further. He was now even more sympathetic to liberal classical economy, and had become interested in monetary theory. He praised John Locke as an expert and 'scientific' monetary theorist, and attacked the Sismondian consumption-oriented approach to economic theory as essentially 'reactionary' (i.e., antipathetic to industrialisation). On the other hand, he referred scornfully to liberal economists -- he was thinking of Say's Law -- who pretended that over-production was impossible in a free-market economy, and defended Fourier's analysis of over-production crises against Grun's criticisms.⁶⁹ It would therefore appear that by the summer of 1846 Marx had ceased to be a Sismondian and had partly discarded his early ethical perspective on classical political economy without, as yet, attaching his flag to the Ricardian school.

If Marx was rethinking his ideas on economics during the first half of 1846, he was also reconsidering his evaluation of French socialists and communists. He had not lost his enthusiasm for French socialism, and he still judged the French the intellectual leaders of the European left, but he had changed his mind over the relative importance of certain French figures. He had also expanded his knowledge of the history of French socialist thought, for example by going through the collected works of Saint-Simon. The second volume of The German Ideology was an extended defence of French

69. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 494, 503-504 & 507; MECW, 5, pp. 509, 518-519 & 522.

socialist/communist theory against recent criticisms in left-wing German journals. In it Marx explained why he considered the leading school of German socialist theory ('true socialism') inferior to the French, and reassessed the four main currents of French socialism as he saw them: Icarianism, Saint-Simonianism, Fourierism, and the works of Proudhon.

Marx and Engels were to spill a lot of ink attacking 'true socialism', so before examining their complaints, it is worth pointing out the significance of their onslaught. To all intents and purposes, they were repudiating the views held by Marx himself from the fall of 1843 to the summer of 1844 and expressed in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher. Volume Two of The German Ideology amounted to a rebuke to other young German socialist intellectuals for not progressing theoretically as its authors had. Marx was under no illusion why he and Engels, virtually alone, had been enabled to advance while their peers remained stationary -- they had studied French socialism and seen industrial England.

'True socialism', as Marx perceived it, was a hybrid and an artificial transplant: a translation of foreign ideas into metaphysical language. It was, in effect, an amalgam of French and English socialist ideas and German neo-Hegelian philosophy. As such, it lacked originality, and Marx demonstrated without too much difficulty that several of the articles in Die Rheinische Jahrbücher, the chief periodical organ of the school, were little more than rehashes of Moses Hess' earlier Einundzwanzig Bogen pieces. Despite the faults

which were now evident in it, Hess' work had been of value when first published -- Marx remembered his own initial debt to Hess for knowledge about French socialism -- but there was no excuse for repeating Hess' formulations verbatim now. The truth of the matter was, he remarked, that 'true socialists' like Karl Grün, Hermann Semmig and Rudolph Matthai had to rely on the writings of Hess and von Stein because they had not themselves read the original French and English works yet their ignorance of the actual writings of Proudhon, Cabet, Considerant and the Saint-Simonians had not prevented them from denouncing French socialism as 'crude' and 'empirical', and launching into eulogies about German 'science' (i.e., Hegelian philosophy). Marx now had a low opinion of the worth of this 'science', and considerable sympathy for the 'crude empiricism' of the French and English, so, like Engels earlier, he took delight in contrasting Fourier's biting commentary on French business with the Germans' nebulous rhetoric about love and freedom.⁷⁰

But why were German socialists so vague and abstract, while the French and English were concrete and clear? The answer, he suggested, was that in France and England communist theory had a social base and was the intellectual expression of a working-class movement. The 'true socialists', on the other hand, spurned the artisans who followed Weitling and had no contacts either with the emerging proletariat of

70. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 435-442; MECW, 5, pp. 455-459. For Marx on Fourier, see MEGA I, 5, pp. 495-504; MECW, 5, pp. 510-518.

factory workers and navvies. In consequence they had reduced socialism to "pure thought", and made it a merely literary phenomenon, lacking any relationship to the "real communist party" which had recently appeared in Germany. One of their worst failings, he argued, was their lack of a historical sense. They had not, for example, grasped the changing relationships between bourgeoisie and proletariat over the last half-century, and as a result they placed an anachronistic stress on the antagonism between rentiers and artisans while ignoring the more crucial exploitation of wage-labour by industrialists. Again, preoccupied with literary and philosophical events, they overestimated the causal role of ideas in promoting social change, and they also made the false assumption that politics was an autonomous sphere of activity which could be understood independently of economic and social developments. All this naivety stemmed, Marx judged, from an ignorance of economics and labour history, and a pretentious urge, derived from Hegelian philosophy, to view everything "sub specie aeternum" instead of "practically, in terms of actually existing men and circumstances".⁷¹

Marx did not deny that, for all their errors, the 'true socialists' hearts were in the right place. Conscious of the intransigence of his condemnation, he attempted to explain why he believed a demolition job was necessary. He charged that by their continual indulgence in poetic and

71. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, p. 445; MECW, 5, p. 462.

abstract waffle about 'love' and 'harmony', and by their use of vague terminology, the German socialists were blurring the distinction between proprietarians and non-proprietarians, obscuring the total opposition of communism to the existing world order, and hindering the development of a communist party in Germany. They had devalued the French slogans of 'égalité' and 'solidarité' by adopting them but giving them no real content, and, by their narrow chauvinism, had hampered the spread of working-class internationalism. Worse still, they were propagating an illusory picture of the social world which, if believed, would prevent the workers from understanding their position vis-à-vis the other classes. According to Marx's account of 'true socialist' doctrine, they asserted that the realm of nature was beautiful, happy and harmonious, and, since human beings were part of the natural world, human society potentially mirrored this benevolence and harmony. In opposition to this sentimentalism Marx, in proto-Darwinian tones, presented nature as a state of "the bitterest competition among animals and plants", and defended Hobbes' description of nature and society as a "bellum omnium contra omnes".⁷² His reading of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French and English materialists had evidently led him to a grim, hard-headed realism sharply at odds with his earlier Romanticism.

Marx categorically repudiated, too, his early Fichtean views of freewill and freedom, to which the 'true

72. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 456-457; MECU, 5, p. 473.

socialists' still adhered, and condemned their concepts of totally free activity as unrealistic and vacuous, claiming that they had 'mystified' the Saint-Simonian ideal of the free development of man's natural capacities by abstracting it from the Saint-Simonians' concern with the expansion of industry and the reorganisation of society. The basic problem with 'true socialism', he asserted, was that its exponents were doing no more than juggle words and concepts; they had turned socialism into an intellectual game divorced from reality, and, in consequence, had become de facto defenders of the status quo. Socialism had to be more than a set of theories, it had to be the ideology of the working classes. Hence, Marx concluded, until Grün and his companions established contacts with the German workers and did their homework studying French socialism and European social history, 'true socialism' was condemned to be ineffective, utopian, and even harmful to the working-class movement.⁷³

In Marx's judgment the root cause of all these errors was thus the Germans' failure to admit their backwardness in socialist theory and to learn from the French. To be sure they had a superficial knowledge of Saint-Simonianism, Fourierism and Proudhon, but they had assimilated only the more utopian, speculative sides of these theorists and had failed to adopt their methods of social criticism. He returned again and again to the 'true socialists' failure to

73. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 449-452; MECW, 5, pp. 466-468.

to go beyond the basic ideas of Fourier and Saint-Simon despite their pretentious claims to do so, and concluded that the state of development of German socialism paralleled that of the French before 1830. The truth was, he intimated, the Germans had not caught up on advances made in the 1830s and early 1840s: they knew something of Saint-Simon, but too little about the Saint-Simonians; they knew about Babouvism, but nothing about Cabet beyond the Voyage; and they had failed to grasp the significance of Icarianism as a mass working-class movement; on the other hand, they were familiar with the bastard Fourierism of La Démocratie pacifique but had not perused Fourier's own oeuvre in detail. Much of Volume Two of The German Ideology was devoted to demonstrating German shallowness and superficiality, and to vindicating Cabet and Fourier, in particular, against their strictures.⁷⁴

The criticisms which irritated Marx most were those laid against Cabet and French communism. To start with, he repudiated the 'true socialists' assumption that Babeuf was an adequate -- even, the best -- theoretical representative of communism. This, of course, was to ignore the evolution of the movement away from putschism, conspiracy and senseless violence, and the Germans' error indicated that they had failed to comprehend that communism would arrive when the economic conditions were ripe and as the result of an upsurge of the whole working population. Icarianism, argued Marx,

74. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 435-516; MECW, 5, pp. 457-530.

had developed far beyond Babouvism, and was best understood as a fusion of the latter and Fourierism, blending Fourier's ideas on free and joyous labour with the egalitarian ideal. As initially formulated by Cabet in the Voyage en Icarie it was, he admitted, still rather crude, but he excused this crudeness on three grounds. The very roughness of French communism, he claimed, reflected its closeness to the beliefs of the workers themselves -- Icarianism was a grass-roots ideology as much as a theoretical system, and all the better for that. Secondly, communist systems like that set out in Icarie were useful, even necessary, at an early stage in the emergence of the labour movement, because they were the kind of propaganda that appealed to the imaginations and emotions of the unsophisticated masses. And, in any case, Cabet should not be judged by Icarie -- the details of which no longer mattered -- but by his polemical writings and, above all, by his contribution as a party organiser and leader.⁷⁵

Marx, who had earlier dismissed Cabet as primitive, unoriginal, and authoritarian, now leaped to his defence against this same charge. It was beside the point, he asserted, to denounce French communism as dogmatic and dictatorial; such criticisms were largely unfounded and, in any case, got one nowhere. Cabet naturally had his limitations, but he was neither mad nor a tyrant; rather, he was a shrewd and dedicated agitator with a firm grasp of the

75. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 442-453 & 505-514; MECW, 5, pp. 459-469 & 520-529.

difficulties and opportunities for expanding his party in the scattered manufacturing localities of France. Marx explained that Cabet, correctly recognising that a permanent periodical with a large circulation was vital to the French communist movement, had insisted on his followers making the sale and diffusion of Le Populaire a top priority, and this decision had led to disputes with other French communists backing rival papers. All this was quite intelligible when one knew the details, and German socialists could easily enough find out the true state of affairs from Cabet's Ma ligne droite. Cabet, then, was in Marx's eyes much more than the author of Icarie; he was the leader of the "actually existing communist party in France". It was Cabet's work as an organiser and tactician that Marx admired, and his drastic change of attitude towards Icarianism indicates he had now adopted Engels' perspective. Icarianism was in France what the two men hoped the Democratic Association would quickly become in England: a mass working-class party committed to both democracy and communism. Cabet's grass-roots support easily outweighed his limitations as a theorist, and Marx had altered his views on Icarianism the moment Engels had convinced him it was a proletarian movement.⁷⁶

Marx and Engels were antagonistic to contemporary Fourierism for much the same reason. There were only a handful of committed Fourierists, they contended, and these were

76. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 444-445 & 505-514 (quotation, p. 449); MECW, 5, pp. 461-462 & 520-529 (quotation, p. 466).

mainly of bourgeois origin. Fourierism was not a working-class movement, and, given its middle-class base of support, it was hardly surprising that Considerant and his followers had resorted to watering down Fourier's doctrines. "Fourier's orthodox disciples of the Démocratie pacifique", Marx commented bluntly, "are, for all their orthodoxy, doctrinaire bourgeois, the very antipodes of Fourier".⁷⁷ Despite his earlier admiration for Considerant, Marx had been disappointed by the latter's recent direction of the Fourierist movement. This currently seemed stagnant and sterile, lacking new ideas, unwilling to modify Fourier's doctrines to take account of the insights of other socialists, and prone to an academic scholasticism which saw in the publication of Fourier's unfinished manuscripts the highest contribution yet made to French socialist theory.

But if Marx was now critical of Considerant, his attitude to Fourier was very different. He fully shared Engels' enthusiasm, and rated him as a creative thinker much higher than Cabet or Owen. Like Icarie, he suggested, Fourier's visionary system was now dated in its details, although the passage of the years had not invalidated his economic and psychological insights. Moreover, it had survived the ravages of time better because it was a work of art suffused with a "true vein of poetry", not merely a piece of propaganda like the systems of Owen and Cabet, which had

77. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, p. 445; MECW, 5, p. 462.

been written in a calculating, "business-like" manner. Fourier, in short, was an imaginative genius, who had scattered through his eccentric writings a wealth of insights which could still be mined with great profit to the communist movement. Marx revealed which elements of Fourier's work he felt were the most valuable, praising above all the Frenchman's "critical side", i.e., his analysis of modern commercial practices and middle-class values.⁷⁸ We have already noted his debt to Fourier's historical method and his explicit recognition of this; and also that he accepted the Fourierist ideal of attractive, non-compulsory labour. But these were not the only things which appealed to him in Fourier's writings. He was impressed by the French socialist's insights into human psychology, which he defended against Karl Grün's attacks, and argued that Fourier's remarks concerning education contained "some masterly observations", and far surpassed anything else achieved by socialist theorists.⁷⁹ He showed himself sympathetic to, although unconvinced by, the serial method, which he judged well worth the trouble of understanding, even though it ultimately had to be superseded. On the other hand, there were certain Fourierist doctrines which he still repudiated: free love, for example, which he classed as a fantasy, and the distinction between capital, talent and labour, which he regarded as susceptible

78. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, p. 495; MECW, 5, p. 510.

79. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 497-498; MECW, 5, p. 512.

to Proudhon's criticisms.⁸⁰ All in all, Marx's remarks in The German Ideology reveal him to have been greatly impressed and considerably influenced by Fourier, although he never accepted the Frenchman's ideas uncritically or in their entirety.

Marx's debt to Saint-Simon was smaller. Indeed, he hardly counted Saint-Simon as a socialist, and explicitly denied that he was a pioneer of either modern political economy or 'scientific socialism'. He distinguished between Saint-Simon and the Saint-Simonian school, pointing out that many of the doctrines ascribed by Germans like Karl Grün to Saint-Simon himself were in fact the work of Bazard and Enfantin -- for example, the theory of alternate critical and organic epochs of history. Saint-Simon, he noted, was primarily a spokesman for the new captains of industry who emerged in France in the wake of the Revolution, and for most of his life had addressed his ideas mainly to the fabricants and négociants which he included in the category of industriels. His division of French society into "travailleurs" and "oisifs" was thus confusing and misleading, because he included among the former industrial capitalists.⁸¹ Despite this lapse, however, Marx considered Saint-Simon a pioneer of class-analysis, and found some value in his division of mankind into three social groups: (i) savants, artists; and

80. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, p. 496; MECW, 5, p. 511.

81. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, p. 448; MECW, 5, p. 464.

other progressives, (ii) propriétaires, opposing innovation, and (iii) the lower classes, desiring greater social equality. He also praised Saint-Simon's slogan of the free and complete development of all man's capacities, believing that it revealed its full power as an ideal only when combined with Fourier's notion of "travail attrayant".⁸² In sum, Marx was somewhat ambivalent about Saint-Simon, recognising him as an important precursor of modern socialism, but perceiving also sharp divergences between his ideas and those to which the modern French labour movement should be committed.

Marx's attitude to the Saint-Simonians was also ambivalent, because he valued their contributions to socialist theory but considered that most of them -- Leroux being one of the few exceptions -- had sold out to the enemy. He suspected that the roots of this apostasy were to be found in the doctrines of the school, and for that reason viewed them with some suspicion. This suspicion was evident, for example, in his critical remarks about the Saint-Simonians' distinction between 'private' and 'true' (i.e., social) property. They had adopted the terminology, he explained, in a justifiable attempt to counter "the stupid clamour of the bourgeoisie", and had by no means intended to renege on the abolition of private property. Nonetheless, it proved the thin end of the wedge, and, Marx commented, "the end to which most of the Saint-Simonians came showed...the ease with which

82. Ibid., MEGA I, 5, pp. 457-461, 466 & 484-487; MECW, 5, pp. 474-476, 481 & 499-501.

this 'true property' is again resolved into 'ordinary private property'".⁸³ He was also hostile to the religious dimension to the school's teaching, and had little sympathy for the adulation of hierarchical authority he detected in both Saint-Simon's Le Nouveau Christianisme and Bazard's Doctrine de Saint-Simon: Exposition. An authoritarian hierarchy was integral to Saint-Simonianism, he considered, because it was the only way the school could retain the religious approach of Le Nouveau Christianisme and at the same time overcome a crucial, unsolved problem bequeathed to them by the master: how to determine, in practice, the "capacité" of individual workers. Once one had rejected egalitarianism (as the Saint-Simonians did), and had decided to base social status and remuneration on ability, some form of social hierarchy was inevitable; and if one lacked adequate means of evaluating ability objectively, an element of authoritarian coercion was also unavoidable. Marx therefore had little sympathy for the Saint-Simonian vision of a well-ordered society kept stable by religion and authority. He approved of the Saint-Simonians' critique of rampant individualism and their desire for an 'organic' community based on 'universal association', but his liberal instincts made him prefer Fourier's libertarian version of 'association' to Bazard's industrial feudalism.⁸⁴

83. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, p. 452; MECW, 5, p. 469.

84. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 490-492; MECW, 5, pp. 505-507.

Yet if Marx had strong reservations about the Saint-Simonians' positive programme, he retained great admiration for their critical analysis of contemporary capitalism. The Globe, he wrote, contained "the most valuable criticism of existing conditions and particularly of economic conditions" available at the time. This, he added, was the most important and lasting element in Saint-Simonianism, and the aspect of the school to which modern communism was most heavily indebted. Marx praised, in addition, the Saint-Simonian periodicals Le Producteur and L'Organisateur, and mentioned with approval Enfantin's Economie politique et politique Saint-Simonienne. He apparently possessed a detailed knowledge of the evolution of the school even after the Bazard/Enfantin split, a knowledge drawn from his conversations with Leroux and from Louis Reybaud's Etudes sur les réformateurs ou socialistes modernes, which he cited in The German Ideology.⁸⁵ To sum up, then, Marx was strongly interested in Saint-Simonianism, and evaluated highly the school's contribution to socialist economic analysis, but had little sympathy for either Saint-Simon's eulogy of industrialists or Bazard's and Enfantin's religious authoritarianism.

Apart from Sismondi, the only other French socialist Marx regarded as a major contributor to modern communist theory was Proudhon. As we have seen earlier, he still had

85. Ibid, MEGA I, 5, pp. 490-495; MECW, 5, pp. 510-514; Barthélemy-Prosper Enfantin, Economie politique et politique, Paris, Guiraudet, 1831; Louis Reybaud, Etudes sur les réformateurs ou socialistes modernes, 3 vols, Bruxelles, Société belge de librairie, 1844.

great respect for Proudhon when he wrote the two volumes of The German Ideology, although it diminished between Volume One (winter 1845-46) and Volume Two (Spring-Summer 1846). In addition to praising Proudhon's critique of Fourier's views on the labour/capital relationship, and the former's attempt to work out a "dialectique sérielle", Marx defended against Stirner Proudhon's account of the origins of private property in Qu'est-ce que la propriété?, lauding the Frenchman's hard-headed analysis of capitalist society. Unlike the 'true socialists', he remarked, Proudhon had the merit of avoiding sentimentality.⁸⁶ Yet, notwithstanding all this praise, Marx's estimation of the mémoires on property had fallen, at least by the time Volume 2 was penned. Commenting on his own remarks on Proudhon in The Holy Family, he suggested that he had been correct to applaud the Frenchman's exposure of property law as ideological, but wrong to accept his vindication of legal principles in the teeth of economic practice. Proudhon, he now believed, had been championing "illusions" in the face of reality, and this kind of socialist idealism ultimately led nowhere. He now considered that the valuable part of Qu'est-ce que la propriété? was not the legalistic demonstrations which had initially appealed to him years ago at Kreuznach, but rather the economic arguments that injustice and instability were inherent in an economy

86. Die deutsche Ideologie, MEGA I, 5, pp. 342-345, 496 & 515; MECW, 5, pp. 362-365, 511 & 530.

based on private property.⁸⁷ Yet by the summer of 1844 Marx, who now had been studying liberal economic theory for two years, was beginning to have second thoughts about even the economic aspects of Proudhon's analysis. The Frenchman's underconsumptionism was fundamentally derived from Sismondi, he recognised, and ultimately one had to choose between a Sismondian approach to political economy and a Ricardian one. If one accepted the Ricardian viewpoint, then Proudhon's economic critique of private property collapsed. In the last pages of Volume II of The German Ideology Marx took the plunge, and wrote seven words which revealed the new direction his mind was taking: "Proudhon's whole set of proofs is wrong".⁸⁸

87. Ibid., MEGA 1, 3, p. 315; MEGA, 3, p. 130.

88. Ibid., MEGA 1, 3, p. 315; MEGA, 3, p. 130.

CHAPTER 12

PROUDHON AND MARX, 1846-47

Proudhon's Sismondian, moralistic approach to economics and Ricardo's cynical liberalism were not compatible, and as Marx came more and more to admire the Englishman's grasp of the workings of industrial capitalism he was bound to lose his respect for the French socialist's views. Two factors hampered this intellectual evolution, however: Proudhon's ideas in Qu'est-ce que la propriété? had played a considerable role in converting Marx to socialism and for this reason required a mental struggle to discard; moreover, Marx had a strong admiration for Proudhon, whom he believed to be the only contemporary French theorist moving along intellectual lines similar to his own. Also the two men were on friendly personal terms. Marx thus had a psychological block against repudiating Proudhon's writings, and this may explain in part his charitable response to De la création de l'ordre, a disappointing, obscure, chaotic work which Proudhon himself soon came to admit had been misconceived. Yet, as we have just seen, Marx suddenly overcame this block in the summer of 1846 when penning the last paragraphs of

The German Ideology, which had left a rift between Proudhon and himself as to the nature of the catalyst which brought to the surface all the latent thoughts about the Frenchman's economic views which had been lying up in his mind during the previous year.²

The subject of this exchange was a proposed Communist Correspondence Committee which Marx and Engels were attempting to set up that spring. Deprived by his exile in Brussels of personal contact with like-minded leftists in Paris and the Rhineland, Marx had resolved to overcome his isolation from what he believed to be a rapidly growing European communist movement by creating a network of communications between socialist groups in Germany, Belgium, France and England. His plan was to head a committee in Brussels which would act as a liaison between, in particular, the Rhineland and Westphalian communists with whom he and Engels had retained links, the more revolutionary French sects, Harney's Democratic Association (i.e., the Chartist left-wing), and socialist-inclined German workers in London, Paris and Brussels.³ He had already persuaded Harney and some Rhinelanders to participate, and had renewed contacts with the

1. Die deutsche Ideologie, vol. II, in MEGA I, 5, p. 515; MECW, 5, p. 529.

2. Marx to Proudhon, 5/5/46, CMF, I, pp. 361-383; Proudhon to Marx, 17/5/46, Correspondance de P.J. Proudhon (ed. J.-A. Langlois), II, Paris, Lacroix, 1875, pp. 198-202.

3. Marx to Proudhon, 5/5/46, CMF, I, pp. 391-393; Engels, "Zur Geschichte des 'Bundes der Kommunisten'", WERKE, 21, p. 212.

leaders of the League of the Just branches in London and Paris, but he badly needed some French correspondents to give the endeavour a thorough international look. His first choice for a French correspondent fell on Proudhon, and in May 1846 -- a few weeks before The German Ideology was completed -- he wrote to him conveying the invitation.⁴

Couching his letter in friendly, mildly flattering tones, Marx explained to Proudhon that the purpose of the venture was to keep socialists in the four countries informed about developments in each, and especially to bring the Germans up-to-date with recent advances in French and English socialism. He stressed that the goal was a free and open exchange of ideas which would, he hoped, aid the labour movement in each country to overcome parochialism and chauvinism. Hinting that a revolutionary situation was developing in Europe, he added that it would be particularly valuable "au moment de l'action" for socialists to have reliable information on the state of affairs in neighbouring countries. He also implied that Proudhon, whose first mémoire was well liked in some German and English socialist circles, would find the Committee a useful vehicle for extending his reputation abroad. Finally, he included a postscript warning Proudhon against Karl Grün -- whom he knew to be a close acquaintance of his in Paris -- as an untrustworthy charlatan and intellectual

4. Marx to Proudhon, 5/5/46, CME, 1, p. 382.

parasite. Engels, too, added a note assuring Proudhon of his profound respect for the latter's works. All in all, it was a conciliatory epistle designed to avoid ruffling the feathers of the irascible Frenchman, and the only section to which Proudhon could possibly take offence was the ad hominem attack on Grün, which Marx meant as sincere and confidential advice between friends.⁵

Proudhon's reply was a disappointment. Although admitting the value of the project and agreeing to participate occasionally, he pleaded lack of time to become a regular correspondent. He then set down a series of reservations designed to make it clear that he believed he and the Committee were further apart ideologically than Marx realised. To start with, he emphasised that his views, far from being communist, were in a state of flux, that he was categorically opposed to any kind of dogmatism in economic matters, and that he considered it the duty of every socialist to maintain "pour quelque temps encore la forme antique ou dubitative". Implying that Marx and his friends were primarily interested in creating a new ideology for the dissatisfied but ignorant lower classes, Proudhon dissociated himself from any attempt to indoctrinate the people. Warning that socialist intellectuals should avoid making themselves "les chefs d'une nouvelle intolérance" or "apôtres d'une nouvelle religion", he

5. Ibid., p. 383.

arrested... the... revolutionary action
 (as Marx... suggested... thorough-going re-examina-
 tion of... social... "à regards jamais la
 question... éprouvé... , et quand nous aurons usé,
 jusqu'à notre dernier argument, commençons s'il faut, avec
 l'éloquence et l'ironie. "En cette condition, j'entrerais avec
 plaisir dans votre association, si non, non!"⁶ Not content
 with warning against making the Correspondence Committee the
 embryo of a communist political party, which he rightly sus-
 pected Marx and Engels of hoping to do, Proudhon stated ex-
 plicitly that he was staunchly opposed to violent insurrec-
 tion by the lower classes. He had, he admitted, changed his
 opinion on this since he had last seen Marx, and his new
 opposition to revolution was the product of his most recent
 studies. He now believed that "resort to the barricades was
 both unnecessary and counter-productive. Not political
 action, but gradual social reform was required, and private
 property should be burned bit by bit, rather than
 given new strength "on fait le saint-Barthélemy des
 propriétaires".⁷

Proudhon's conversion to pacific reformism in fact
 followed logically from the theory of economic mutualism which
 he was working out at the time, and which he was to advocate

6. Proudhon to Marx, 17/5, 4b, C^{MC}, I, p. 382.

7. Ibid., p. 200.

in his new major publication, Système des contradictions économiques, ou Philosophie de la misère.⁸ He did no more than hint at this in his letter to Marx, so the latter was left puzzled at what appeared a rather drastic shift in the Frenchman's politics. From what Proudhon did say, however, it was quite obvious that he had joined the camp of those early socialists -- the Fourierists and Owenites included -- who saw the democratic-republican movement as a waste of time and who abhorred violent protest. He made it clear that he intended shortly to provide an extended justification of his new 'line', and indeed suggested that Marx should write a critical review of his forthcoming book, promising that if his re-evaluation proved to be a mistake he would submit to a 'caning' with good grace.⁹ In effect, this was a way of saying that the Correspondence Committee should wait a while and see whether it still wanted such a renegade as a member. Marx understood it this way. As he interpreted the Frenchman's ambivalent letter, Proudhon had, at least for the time being, ruled himself out as a correspondent, and, worse still, it looked as if he was going to become a formidable opponent to revolutionary communism. From Marx's point of view this was a far from satisfactory situation.

8. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Système des contradictions économiques, ou philosophie de la misère, 2 vols., Paris, Guillaumin, 1846; reprinted as Oeuvres complètes, 1, 2 vols., Paris, Rivière, 1923. Subsequent footnotes are to the Rivière edition.

9. Proudhon to Marx, 17/5/46, Correspondance, II, p. 244.

Proudhon's letter irritated him in another way too. Ignoring the reasons Marx had given for treating Grün with suspicion, Proudhon warmly defended him, regretted that personal clashes were dividing German socialism, and urged reconciliation.¹⁰ Marx had no intention of offering an olive branch to Grün -- he was currently trying to find a publisher for The German Ideology, in which the man was roundly chastised for ignorance and intellectual dishonesty -- and took this to mean that Proudhon preferred Grün's friendship to his own. The supposed insult rankled, and destroyed the feeling of amity which had previously conditioned Marx's intellectual response to Proudhon's writings. Furthermore, Marx and Engels deduced that Proudhon had chosen to support their opponents in the quarrel over 'true socialism', and jumped to the conclusion that Proudhon's new theories must be akin to those of the German 'utopians', and hence that he was, in ideological terms, moving backwards.¹¹ This was, in fact, a distortion, which they later acknowledged, but the mere suspicion predisposed them against Proudhon and caused them to approach his book with more hostility than they would otherwise have done. So, while it would be a mistake to over-emphasise the psychological element in Marx's repudiation of Proudhon, it is reasonable to ascribe the uncharitable tone

10. Ibid., pp. 200-202.

11. Engels to Comité de correspondance communiste (Bruxelles), 16/9/46, CME, 1, pp. 409-411.

of his subsequent polemics to personal animosity born of unrequited friendship. However, as we have seen, there were also good political reasons for the Marx/Proudhon break, and it is most likely that Marx had been for several months experiencing intellectual doubts about the validity of Proudhon's theories.

Thwarted in his first attempt to find a French correspondent, Marx apparently tried Louis Blanc, another Parisian acquaintance. Blanc was no more receptive than Proudhon. Struggling to combine the life of an historian with that of a political journalist, he was loth to take on new commitments; he was not, in any case, a communist, and was hesitant to adopt an out-and-out revolutionary stance; moreover, although anti-clerical, he was not anti-Christian, and he was put off by the militant atheism of Marx and his circle. As he quite rightly suspected that the Correspondence Committee represented only a tiny group of German émigré intellectuals having little grass-roots support in any European country. Although he did not close the door to future collaboration with the Committee, and his reluctance led to no personal antagonism, it was obvious that he had other fish to fry and would not do the job properly.¹² Marx and

12. Richard N. Hunt, The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels, I, Marxism and Totalitarian Democracy, 1818-1850, Pittsburgh, U. of Pittsburgh P., 1974, p. 149. Blanc's attitude at this time to Marx and his circle was distant but not hostile, as can be deduced from his later conversation with Engels, reported by the latter to Marx and the Comité de correspondance communiste; Engels to Marx, 26/10/47,

Engels were now at a loss whom to ask. Cabet was an obvious choice, but as yet they had no contacts with him, were not sure where he was, and suspected he would in any case refuse to collaborate with a group of unknown Germans. Leroux had retired to the countryside to farm organically and work on his printing invention, so he was out of contact with events in the capital. Considerant was too bourgeois, Lamennais too Christian, Dézamy too hostile to intellectuals. Even the leaders of the remnants of the German artisans' League of the Just in Paris were unreliable: some of them had been involved in Blanquist conspiracies (of which Marx and Engels disapproved), some were disciples of Weitling (whom Marx and Engels now regarded as a 'utopian'), and others were currently being 'seduced' by Grün. Faced with this impasse, the Committee decided it would have to create its own Parisian correspondent, and Engels, who had loved the French capital when he spent a week there in the fall of 1844, was eager to take on the task. He moved to Paris in August 1846, equipped with instructions to contact Blanc, Cabet, Leroux, the editors of a monthly paper produced by Parisian artisans (L'Atelier), and spokesman for the German workers in the city.¹³

A few days after arriving in France, Engels discovered

12 (cont'd) CME, 1, pp. 493-500. On Blanc's activities during these years, see Leo Loubère, Louis Blanc, Evanston, Northwestern U.P., 1961.

13. Engels to Comité de correspondance communiste, 19/8/46, CME, 1, pp. 402-406.

that Cabet could be found at the offices of Le Populaire, so he went to see him about joining the Correspondence Committee. Cabet welcomed him cordially, and, seeing in Engels a source of information about the German and English labour movements, gave him an open invitation to return whenever he liked. But he could not be persuaded to join the Committee. Engels reported to Marx: "Nous devons le laisser tranquille avec notre correspondance. Premièrement il a bien assez à faire et deuxièmement il est trop méfiant. Il y verrait un piège, le désir d'abuser de son nom".¹⁴ Nor was Engels any more successful with Blanc. La Réforme, the republican-democratic newspaper with which Blanc was associated, was at the time following a relatively moderate policy and disassociating itself from the extreme left, so he found its doors closed to German communists.¹⁵ Leroux, too, was a non-starter; Engels discovered that he had retreated into a world of his own, was running his monthly La Revue sociale single-handed, and seemed interested only in reliving old intellectual battles between the Saint-Simonians and Fourierists. In the current issue of La Revue sociale, Engels reported to the Brussels Committee, Leroux was attempting to demonstrate that Fourier's Théorie des quatre mouvements (one of Engels' favourite books) was plagiarised

14. Engels to Marx, 19/8/46, CME, 1, pp. 399.

15. Engels to Marx, 26/10/47, CME, 1, pp. 493-500. Judging from this later conversation, Engels almost certainly failed to see Blanc personally during his first stay in Paris in the fall/winter of 1846-47.

from Saint-Simon's Lettres d'un habitant de Genève, a claim which the young German dismissed as absurd, adding scathingly, "Ce type-là est complètement fou", which disposed of Leroux as a candidate.¹⁶ As for Considerant, Engels saw no reason to change his opinion that La Démocratie pacifique and La Phalange were presenting an emaciated and uninspiring version of Fourier's doctrines to a middle-class audience. Considerant had turned into an academic concerned primarily with publishing Fourier's posthumous manuscripts no matter how trivial or odd, with the result that "ces messieurs les fouriéristes deviennent chaque jour plus ennuyeux (et) La Phalange ne contient que des absurdités".¹⁷ So no help would be forthcoming from that quarter. The only other possibility seemed to be L'Atelier. Engels bought the paper and reported on its contents to the group in Brussels, but at this time he apparently made no attempt to contact its editors, perhaps fearing that as a non-ouvrier and foreigner he had little chance of a favourable response.¹⁸ Discouraged by the failure of his initiatives among the French, he soon decided to concentrate his energies instead on the German artisans in the city.

He quickly found out that the Parisian branch of the League of the Just, which a few years previously had been

16. Engels to Comité de correspondance communiste, 19/8/46, CME, 1, p. 404.

17. Engels to Marx, 19/8/46, CME, 1, p. 401.

18. Engels to Comité de correspondance communiste, 19/8/46, CME, 1, p. 404.

reorganisation by 1843-45 and with which Marx had been in contact while staying in Paris in 1843-45, had now disintegrated. The more politically-aware of the German artisans, he reported to Marx, were ideologically very confused and fragmented organisationally, but there seemed to be three main groupings: a remnant of Weitling's disciples, a group around Marx's old friend Ewerbeck, and a majority who were attracted to the ideas of Karl Grün. Grün, it appeared, was still a close friend of Proudhon, and had been converted to his new theories. Ewerbeck, on the other hand, though he also knew Proudhon quite well, had seen through Grün, and had tried unsuccessfully to warn the Frenchman against him. Engels allied himself with Ewerbeck, who now regretted allowing Grün to obtain a position of influence over the German artisan community, and the two men agreed to do their best to discredit Grün in the eyes of the workers and to win the latter back to revolutionary communism. Engels thus redefined his task in Paris as educating the German artisans in his and Marx's brand of communist doctrine.¹⁹

Preoccupied with this project, he apparently made no more attempts to contact French socialists in Paris, although he did continue to read their publications. Rather spasmodically, he reported to Brussels on developments on the French left, for example, the split in September among the staff of the

19. Engels to Comité de correspondance communiste, 16/9/46, CME, 1, pp. 407-411.

communist paper La Fraternité between atheist materialists and "spiritualistes" (i.e., Christian communists).²⁰ Despite his rebuff at La Réforme he read the newspaper regularly, and it seems to have been his primary source of information about day-to-day French politics, on which he occasionally dispatched an article to The Northern Star.²¹ However, because Grün was now a disciple of Proudhon, he was unable to ignore the latter. Proudhon had finished writing the Système de contradictions économiques, had authorised Grün to do a German translation, and was busily publicising his theory of mutualism as a 'third way' between liberalism and socialism which avoided the mistakes of both. He had become more intransigently hostile to communism, now considering it just as dangerous as laissez-faire capitalism. Proudhon's book was still in the press, but Engels made it his business to find out what it said and to retail the news to Marx.

By the middle of September he had discovered enough to report to the Brussels Committee. Proudhon, he wrote, had a grandiose plan for creating money out of nothing and bringing paradise to all workers. What was this scheme which, Grün claimed, would save the world? According to Engels, it was no more and no less than the labour-bazaar project pioneered by the Owenites in England some years back: Proudhon envisaged

20. Ibid., p. 415.

21. Engels, "Government and opposition in France", The Northern Star, no. 460, 5/9/46; reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 29-30; MECW, 6, pp. 61-62.

that workers in all countries would come together in a single great association and exchange the products they had made at prices calculated according to the amount of labour embodied in them, while selling any excess production on the world market as a means of accumulating further capital for the association. By abolishing production and distribution in this way, Proudhon believed, the profits of entrepreneurs and middlemen would be retained by the workers, prices would accurately reflect production costs, and exploitation would be eliminated.²²

Engels was highly sceptical of the project's viability. He pointed out that the precedents were poor, since such equitable exchange-workers had failed "ten times" in England; moreover, he judged Proudhon's economic theory to be shaky. The Frenchman, he thought, had overestimated the savings which would be achieved by eliminating retailers, and had underestimated the riskiness of the entire operation for the workers involved. But most important of all, he had failed to solve the problem of capital accumulation. The project would need a large amount of capital to set up, which the workers did not possess; had they possessed it they would have already set up their own small businesses. Yet if they borrowed capital -- assuming for the moment they could find a credit bank willing to lend enough -- they would find that the

22. Engels to Marx, 18/9/46, CML, 1, pp. 420-421.

associations was provided with large interest payments and that their own incomes were no higher than previously. In a few trades, Engels admitted, the quantity of capital required would be relatively small, but a Proudhonian association limited to these would exclude large-scale factory industry, building, and agriculture; in short, it would be limited to artisan trades and would be powerless to transform the capitalist economy. He discerned that the scheme reflected the utopian mentality of the old artisan guilds, and that like these Straubinger Proudhon had failed to come to terms with the modern world of steam-power and machinery. The whole project, he concluded, was enough to make one "dr... laughing". But at any rate, it made Proudhon's change of politics intelligible because the planned mutualist association was a pacific 'remedy' for working-class poverty, and if the workers were to throw all their energies into mutualism they would have neither time nor incentive to mount the barricades.²³

A few days later, Engels wrote to Marx with more details of Proudhon's plans. He was now even more scathing about the scheme. In his last letter, he remarked ironically he had committed a grave injustice with regard to Proudhon: he had taken Proudhon's project seriously, while drawing attention to its weaknesses. Now he had more details, and it was evident

23. Ibid.

that the whole affair was a piece of tomfoolery going far beyond the bounds of common sense. Proudhon had, after all, tried to prescribe how his association would obtain its initial capital: it would issue small-denomination shares to be purchased by workers, and would use the money thus raised to set up a few workshops as a pilot project. The shareholders would receive no dividends, but would have the right to buy goods from the workshops at cost price. The workshops, though, would sell most of their products on the open market, and would use the profits to gradually set up new workshops with the aim of eventually employing all French workers in all trades. Proudhon envisaged that as the pilot project proved viable, more and more working-class families would put their savings into the scheme, and the rate of expansion would increase, so that the association's workshops would fairly quickly come to rival existing capitalist enterprises. In time, he thought, enough capital would have been raised for the association to buy up mines and factories, and thus branch out from the artisan trades into textiles and heavy industry.²⁴

This was an answer to his previous objection to the scheme (i.e., that Proudhon had ignored the problem of investment capital), but in Engels' opinion it was a feeble one. Proudhon and his supporters, he expostulated, had the intention of

24. Engels to Marx, 18/9/46, CME, 1, pp. 420-421.

buying up the whole of France by means of economies made by workers participation in the scheme plus the petty savings of other workers foreclosing interest on their deposits. Could anyone imagine a more fantastic project? Workers who were incapable of keeping six sous in their pockets to buy wine at their weekly discussion meetings were going to purchase all of French industry with their savings! He commented mockingly that Rothschild and Co. would pale into insignificance beside these "formidable accapareurs". The whole business was, in his opinion, totally absurd, and he had no patience with "idiots" who believed in the practicality of such schemes. Momentarily he even suspected the author's good faith; Proudhon, he suggested, desperately wanted to make a name for himself as an economist, and this plan was calculated to make him acceptable to reputable liberals like Blanqui.²⁵ But Engels was soon forced to recognise that even if he could no longer take Proudhon seriously, the German artisans in Paris, to whom Grün had explained the project, did. They were, he reported sorrowfully to Marx, almost unanimously enthusiastic about the idea, and even Ewerbeck seemed to support it. Only one of the leaders of the German community was unconvinced, Junge, a man who had previously worked in Brussels and become a member of Marx's circle there. Clearly Engels had a major task on his hands if he hoped to dissuade

25. Ibid. Also, Engels to Comité de correspondance communiste, 16/9/46, CME, 1, p. 411.

even the German Parisians from embracing mutualism. Proudhon, it appeared, was proving even more of a menace than he and Marx had feared.²⁶

Engels accordingly took the bull by the horns, attended the German artisans' weekly meetings, and spoke out against mutualism. Initially he had little success, merely inciting a storm of abuse from Grün's converts. He established himself, however, as the spokesman for a small group of dissidents who were emotionally committed to the ideal of utopian communism and who perceived the incompatibility between Proudhonian mutualism and communism. Recognising a potent weapon here, Engels saw a way of separating Grün from his followers. Grün, he informed Marx, was very hostile to communists, whereas the vast majority of German workers, in this respect still under the influence of Weitling, vaguely thought of themselves as such. He would exploit this difference by pressing the workers' gathering to vote whether or not it considered itself a communist society, and once the workers had declared in favour of communism he might have a better chance of persuading them that Proudhonianism was anti-communist.²⁷

He put this tactic into operation at a German workers' educational meeting in mid-October, and found, to his delight, that it worked. To start with he denounced Proudhon's

26. Engels to Marx, 18/9/46, CME, 1, p. 421.

27. Engels to Marx, 18/10/46, CME, 1, pp. 429-430.

scheme as petty-bourgeois, anti-proletarian, and utopian, but when this name-calling had little effect, he raised the issue of the meeting's commitment to communism. Pressed to define communism, he sought to differentiate his own version from the élitist Babouvian tradition, from gradualist reformism, and from non-political 'economic' socialism, whether Owenite, Fourierist or Proudhonian; communism, he suggested, was a blend of insurrectionary democratic-republican ideology with the ideal of a non-propertyarian community. He suggested to the meeting that communists desired (i) to make the workers' interests prevail over those of the bourgeoisie, (ii) to suppress private property and replace it with a "community of goods", and (iii) to achieve these goals by means of a violent but democratic revolution. This definition won the approval of his audience; the German workers voted 13 to 2 to accept it, and subsequently recognised that mutualism, since it repudiated political action and allegedly conserved 'individual' property, was fundamentally antipathetic to communism.²⁸

Engels had won a victory of sorts; however, it was a very minor victory, because the German artisans in the French capital numbered several thousand and he had no means of reaching more than a few dozen. He had hopes of gaining control of a new German-language periodical aimed at the artisan community, but in the event he was disappointed. Furthermore,

28. Engels to Comité de correspondance communiste, 23/10/46, CME, 1, pp. 431-433.

after a couple of months' agitational work, he discovered that his tiny group of communist workers had attracted the attention of the Parisian police. In December he reported to Marx that the group's meetings now had to be held clandestinely, and that it was no longer possible for them to hold public debates at the barrière, thus making it difficult for them to win converts. Mouchards were everywhere; rumour had it that the Prefect of Police had Junge, Everbeck and himself marked down as "les chefs d'une dangereuse bande" and he would have to be very careful to avoid expulsion from France. In any case, he felt he had done as much as he could, single-handed, to influence these Straubinger towards revolutionary communism -- a nucleus of a future communist party had been created, and he believed that workers like Junge were better placed to run and expand the organisation.²⁹

In constant fear of arrest, Engels avoided Weitling, who had returned to the French capital, made no further efforts to contact French socialists, and even kept away from his group of German workers. Using as a convenient excuse the need to look the part of a pleasure-seeking tourist, he spent his time in bars, dances, and brothels. "Je dois à Monsieur Delcassé" (the Prefect of Police), he wrote to Marx, "d'avoir fait la connaissance de très jolies grisettes, et je lui dois beaucoup de plaisir, car j'ai voulu profiter des journées et des nuits

29. Engels to Marx, December 1846, CME, I, pp. 440-442.

qui pouvaient être mes dernières à Paris".³⁰ He nevertheless found the time to study carefully Proudhon's Système des contradictions économiques, which had now appeared in print, and offered Marx his detailed reading-notes in case his friend wanted to mention it in the treatise on political economy on which he was still working in Brussels. Engels added that Proudhon's new book was far inferior to his earlier writings and was scarcely worth its elevated price of fifteen francs.³¹ Marx agreed. He too read the Système at the end of December, and fired off his first impressions to a Russian friend, Annenkov, who had requested his judgement: "Je vous avouerai franchement que je trouve le livre en général mauvais et très mauvais".³² It was immediately clear to him that the thinker he had once regarded as the leading European socialist theorist had gone completely off the rails. But how and why? Marx quickly decided how, in broad terms, Proudhon had gone astray: his methodology was faulty, his theory of social development wrong-headed, and he had misunderstood Ricardian economics. But why had this highly intelligent Frenchman fallen into such errors? Marx's conclusion was that he had mistakenly tried to steer a middle way between liberalism and communism, which was unviable, and which reflected the ideals of an honest petty-bourgeois caught between the values of the entrepreneurial

30. Ibid., p. 441.

31. Ibid., p. 446.

32. Marx to Annenkov, 28/14/46, CME, 1, p. 447.

middle-class and those of an increasingly revolutionary working-class.³³

Marx developed this thesis and worked out his detailed disagreements with the new Proudhon in two pieces: the above-mentioned letter to Annenkov, and a short book, The Poverty of Philosophy.³⁴ Like The Holy Family and The German Ideology, this work was a polemical commentary on a text which Marx had in front of him at the time of writing; as a result it sometimes lapsed into obscurity or became bogged down in minutiae. The lengthy letter to Annenkov was in fact a more comprehensive if less detailed critique, although it omitted any commentary on Proudhon's theory of value to which half the book was devoted. The Poverty of Philosophy actually appeared in print about a year after Marx first jotted down his reactions to mutualism, but its author had in no way altered his views in the meantime and it is best understood as an amplification of the earlier critique since this helps one to place its detailed polemical commentary within an overall perspective. It is therefore both legitimate and useful to discuss the letter and the book together, despite the time-gap between them. However, neither are properly intelligible without a grasp of what Proudhon was arguing in

33. Ibid., pp. 457-458.

34. Karl Marx, Misère de la philosophie. Réponse à la philosophie de la misère de H. Proudhon, Bruxelles, Vogler, 1847 & Paris, Frank, 1847; reprinted in MECA I, 6, pp. 117-228; English translation in MECW, 6, pp. 105-212.

La Syst me des contradictions  conomiques, so it is to this work that we must turn first.

Proudhon believed that La Syst me was an exceptionally important, even epoch-making, book. He had four main grounds for so doing. To start with, he thought the work pioneered a new science of society, both methodologically and by delineating its proper subject-matter. Secondly, he had embodied in the book a philosophy of history which he claimed rendered intelligible -- for the first time -- the pattern and purpose of human history. Furthermore, he claimed to have penetrated, by means of his theories of 'constituted value' and 'economic contradictions', to the root of the sickness of modern society, and to have explained how the manifestation of this sickness, poverty, was bound to worsen unless the economy was reorganised according to a new principle. And finally, he was certain that he had discovered what this principle was -- mutualism -- and that he had demolished the rival theories of social organisation that had hitherto been dominant: liberalism and communism. The book thus combined an analysis of how European society had evolved in the past with a blueprint for the future and a critique of alternative Weltanschauungen. It was conceived on a grand scale, as a rival to the other great intellectual systems of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries created by 'giants' like Rousseau, Condorcet, Bentham, Hegel, Fourier, Saint-Simon, and Comte. Proudhon, who was not a modest man, was well aware of the magnitude of his endeavour, and in his more conceited moments saw himself

as the secular prophet whose task it was to set the human race back on its historical path. In his less light-headed moods, he merely claimed to have fused the disciplines of history, political economy and philosophy into a new 'meta-physical' science of social economy which would, in turn, prescribe how the working class might establish a new, free, and just society.³⁵

Proudhon's ideas on the methodology of his new science were closely bound up with his theory of history. Fundamentally they both derived from the Enlightenment, in particular from the historical rationalism of Condorcet and the notion of 'natural' social laws which the latter shared with earlier philosophes, but Proudhon had fused this proto-positivism with a theory of dialectical logic which he had garnered from Kant and from Young Hegelians like Marx himself, Bakunin and Grün (all of whom he had befriended in Paris in the mid-1840s).³⁶ The Système was abstract and repetitive in style, and Proudhon's philosophical theories failed to emerge with sufficient clarity, but his outlook appears reminiscent of Hegel's in significant respects. The new social

35. P.-J. Proudhon, Système des contradictions économiques, ou Philosophie de la misère, Paris, Rivière, 1923, vol. 1, pp. 52-89 & vol. 2, pp. 391-412 (as indicated in note 8 above, these two volumes form t. 1 of the Rivière edition of Proudhon's Oeuvres complètes).

36. On Proudhon's relationships with these Young Hegelians in Paris, see Robert L. Hoffman, Revolutionary Justice, Chicago, U. of Illinois P., 1972, pp. 85-94. Hoffman concludes that the influence of Hegel and Young Hegelianism on Proudhon was minimal.

science, argued, would supersede traditional philosophy and liberal political economy; the former had become divorced from practical human problems, while the latter had lapsed into a-morality. From now on, philosophy would be a kind of "algebra of society", discerning and predicting the course of social evolution, while political economy, put back on an ethical foundation, would be the tool by means of which a better social order could be created.³⁷ The basic purpose of the new science, he explained, would be to reveal the "organic law of humanity". He conceived this as a sort of "living logic", and argued that although history appeared haphazard and fortuitous, by penetrating beneath the surface one could detect a pattern in the past and a goal inscribed in the future. But for that one required a methodology attune to the pattern of historical change, and since -- Proudhon averred -- this pattern was a 'dialectical' one, so too the new science's method would have to be 'dialectical'.³⁸

Proudhon had not adequately worked out his theory of a 'dialectical' scientific method. But it is clear that he conceived 'scientific' knowledge as emerging in four stages. These were (i) a priori reasoning, (ii) induction, (iii) 'dialectical' understanding -- a perception of the 'contradictions' inherent in truths obtained by deduction and induction (Proudhon

37. Proudhon, Système, vol. 1, pp. 393 & 395-396.

38. Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 159, 177 & 185.

mentioned Kant and Hegel as the leading thinkers who had elucidated this superior form of understanding), and (iv) 'scientific' knowledge, which involved a historical perspective on the subject-matter, a resolution or synthesis of the 'contradictions' perceived in step three, and an arrangement of the data in the form of a 'serial law' (Proudhon appears to have taken this latter idea from Fourier).³⁹ In conformity with this theory of knowledge, he wrote the Systeme in the form of a 'serial law', and tried to demonstrate that his own ideas on philosophy, economics and history transcended those of contemporary liberal economists and socialist theorists. Furthermore, he claimed that by arranging the basic categories of political economy in an evolutionary series, one could elucidate the 'necessary' course of development of European economic life (and hence European society), bringing out the inherent tensions in each stage which forced society to move onward and upward. Each epoch in the history of Europe, he maintained, reflected a distinctive economic principle in accordance with which society was organised. Since feudalism there had been ten such epochs, embodying the economic categories of division of labour, machinism, competition, monopoly, taxation, foreign trade, credit, property, communism, and population; only one more remained to come: mutualism, which was destined to resolve all the contradictions and inequalities

39. Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 177-178.

created by the previous ten. He usually asserted that the evolution of economic categories preceded and caused major social transformations, but he sometimes also, though not so frequently, implied that these intellectual developments were manifestations of fundamental changes in the nature of the economy itself, thus casting doubt on the primacy of ideas over more material forces. On balance, though, he seems to have believed that social and economic facts were, in his own phrase, "manifestations visibles d'idées invisibles", and hence that the tortured development of economic theory had determined the zigzag route followed by European society in its progress towards its ultimate goal: a community organised on mutualist lines.⁴⁰

Proudhon's approach to history was therefore teleological, and like Condorcet he interpreted the evolution of society as a progressive implementation of the dictates of human reason. Although, as in the case of Marx, he probably derived this ultra-rationalist perspective from the French Enlightenment, he followed Hegel in giving the theory a metaphysical veneer by talking in terms of "Providence", "the Reason of Humanity", and "the Social Genius" guiding mankind through the necessary economic stages leading to mutualism. On various occasions he also employed the word "God", and he devoted two chapters to a lengthy discussion of the legitimacy of the notion of "Divine Providence" as a heuristic device in

40. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 169-170.

his new historical sociology; his conclusion seems to have been that the concept was admissible if denuded of all supernatural connotations and used as an equivalent to Hegel's 'Spirit', but as a passionate atheist and anti-clerical he sometimes balked at even this attenuated usage. He was similarly troubled by the word 'Providence', which he in fact employed extensively, and explained that he wanted to divorce it from its religious connotations.⁴¹

Proudhon was thus advancing a non-religious speculative philosophy of history: it was 'historicist' (in Popper's sense of the term), because it saw the entire course of history as purposive and inevitable. However, the religious language which he felt, despite his atheism, unable to discard, suggests that his approach to history was indebted to Bossuet and Bonald as well as Condorcet and Hegel; ultimately, though, the theological dimension to the work was superfluous, and Proudhon's vision of social evolution was secular. The tension in his own mind, which he never fully resolved, is nonetheless glaringly evident in the text of *La Systême*, and may be illustrated by two brief quotations. "L'Histoire des sociétés", he wrote, "n'est plus pour nous qu'une longue détermination de l'idée de Dieu, une révélation progressive de la destinée de l'homme".⁴² But he also averred bluntly: "Je nie

41. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 34-35.

42. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 53.

donc la suprématie de Dieu sur l'humanité; je rejette son gouvernement providentiel..."⁴³ The truth was that he wanted to abolish God but retain a developmental law regulating, fatalistically, the entire course of human history. He had doubts whether this purely secular 'Providence' was intellectually defensible and he acknowledged the theory was unverifiable, but he advanced it nevertheless as an essential hypothesis without which a science of society was not feasible. As he candidly admitted in the Prologue to La Système: "J'ai besoin de l'hypothèse de Dieu...pour donner un sens à l'histoire".⁴⁴

Given this commitment to inevitable progress, Proudhon felt obliged to indicate the motor and mechanism of change, and also to explain why poverty seemed to be spreading, not diminishing. His answer was to apply the notion of 'dialectical contradictions' (which, as we have seen, he derived from Kant and Young Hegelianism), to the history of economic thought and, indirectly, to the evolution of the European economy. As mentioned above, he argued that modern society was the end-product of a ten-stage developmental process since the Middle Ages, and that each of these stages had reflected a different principle according to which economic life had been ordered at the time. Every epoch, he claimed, had inherent within it

43. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 384.

44. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 53.

certain insoluble problems or 'contradictions' which rendered it unstable and susceptible to resolution. The main body of his book consisted of a series of fairly detailed analyses of these ten economic 'categories' or epochs, and in each case he attempted to demonstrate that it had been impossible to construct a free, just, and stable society on the basis of that particular principle. For example, he argued in Smithian tones that once the division of labour became an economic norm workshops were created and mechanisation followed inexorably, subjecting men to "le travail parcellaire" and causing "une décadence de l'esprit" despite the increased productivity and wealth which also resulted. Similarly, once an economy based on free competition began to function, some entrepreneurs always outsold their rivals, cornered markets, and obtained monopolies, thus destroying free competition and its advantages. Again, he argued that any attempt to overcome the division of men into entrepreneurs and wage-labourers by developing government credit institutions designed to supply capital to propertyless workers would end up by reinforcing the state and accelerating the growth of capitalism. Proudhon thus had a strong sense of counter-finality in economic matters, and was convinced that economies had in the past been fluid and unstable, never working smoothly and continuously evolving from one set of problems to another. The difficulties ('contradictions') inherent in each type of economic order, he believed, determined how and why it developed into

the next, and the key to Europe's social history could be found by charting this step-by-step process.⁴⁵

Proudhon's attempt to follow and explain this ten-stage historical sequence in Le Système gave him the opportunity to set down his views on a variety of topics in economic theory. Indeed, a large part of the book was devoted to abstract theoretical (not historical) disquisitions on questions like free trade versus protectionism, the efficacy of progressive income tax, monetary theory, and the effects of monopolies. He also included extended onslaughts on political economists and social theorists he disliked, for instance Malthus and Louis Blanc. The book was written in a self-indulgent, rambling and repetitive style, and the main lines of its author's argument frequently became lost in rebarbative, long-winded polemics. However, in addition to the theory of history which provided the work's overall structure, there were unifying themes running through all, or almost all, his discussions. This was the problem of poverty, alluded to in the book's subtitle, Philosophie de la misère.

Proudhon's basic thesis was that the growth of commercial (and, later, industrial) capitalism had witnessed the simultaneous development of both wealth and poverty: this dualism, he argued, was the most fundamental feature of

45. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 141 & 347, vol. 2, pp. 100 & 399.

contemporary society, but neither liberal economists nor socialists had ever succeeded in explaining it. It was, he believed, rooted in a fundamental 'antagonism' between use-value and exchange value, an 'antagonism' which had been rendered progressively more acute by the development of the European capitalist economy. He alone, he claimed, could, with the aid of the concepts of 'dialectical contradictions' and 'serial law', discern the innerent logic in the evolution of the economic system which had so inexorably created extremes of misery and luxury. Proudhon's theory of history was thus at one and the same time his theory of poverty. He had tried to carry out Buret's injunctions to make economics a historical and moral science concerned to elucidate the causes of poverty rather than the best methods of money-making. The conclusion of his work purported to demonstrate that not only was a mutualist economy, based on 'constituted value', the goal of economic progress, it was the only régime capable of eliminating or "balancing" the antagonistic and destructive forces which contemporary capitalism had unleashed. Only mutualism, he declared, could minimise the bad effects of the division of labour and machinism, only mutualism could find the right balance between unrestrained competition and monopoly, only mutualism could avoid the evils of laissez-faire and étatisme, and only mutualism could steer a middle way between private property and communism to create a just, free, and orderly society based on both individual initiative and

social co-operation.⁴⁵

The subject-matter of Proudhon's Système was right in line with Marx's intellectual interests: he too believed in the need for a new science of society, and had been searching for an appropriate methodology; he was fascinated by the theories of Smith, Ricardo and Sismondi (from whom Proudhon chiefly borrowed); he was in the process of working out an over-view of European history centred around economic developments; he was also convinced that contemporary society was sick and that the simultaneous growth of wealth and poverty revealed that the disease was economic in nature; and, like Proudhon, he was searching for the theoretical foundations of a new non-commercial society. Prima facie, then, even if Marx had his detailed disagreements with the Frenchman's views, he should have had some sympathy for his general aims. In fact, in neither of Marx's critical reviews of the book did he express the slightest appreciation of what Proudhon had endeavoured to do. And while the acerbic tone of his remarks can be put down to personal animosity sharpening a critical style which was always trenchant, this apparent blindness on Marx's part seems to demand an explanation. Actually it was more apparent than real. Marx, although he never gave Proudhon credit for it, understood (and expropriated for his own use) the central methodological aperçu in the Système, the idea that European society was developing in a

46. Ibid., passim but especially vol. 2, pp. 326-412.

'dialectic.1' fashion as a result of certain 'contradictions' inherent in post-feudal economic systems. He also realised that Proudhon was trying to make political economy historical by integrating economic theory with a philosophy of history, and he accepted this as a valid intellectual goal, even though he considered Proudhon had failed miserably in his attempt. Despite the blanket hostility of Marx's comments, then, it would be wrong to conclude that Marx failed to perceive what Proudhon was up to. On the contrary, it was because he thought Proudhon's enterprise was valid and important, but had miscarried in the execution, that he bothered to write a book subjecting it to detailed criticism.

Nonetheless, although he grasped the general thrust of the work, there were some aspects of the Système which initially puzzled Marx. He thought it remarkably "formless and pretentious", in large part due to its author's decision to include lengthy and abstract disquisitions on God and Providence, but also because of its overt reliance on a quasi-Hegelian philosophical method. Why, he pondered, had Proudhon felt compelled to deck out a treatise on economic theory in the garb of German Idealist metaphysics? Why did he talk so much about God and universal reason? In his letter to Annenkov, Marx suggested an answer to these questions. Proudhon, he conjectured, saw history as a series of cumulative changes unplanned by the men who implemented them, and was unable to explain how a 'rational' pattern could emerge out of this concatenation of individual actions without resorting to the

Hegelians' view of a 'first step'. But such recourse to ultimately meaningless 'my ideal causes', Marx argued, was an implicit admission that he could not provide a more empirical explanation for social and economic progress.⁴⁷ He concluded, therefore, that Proudhon had introduced speculative philosophy into his book as a substitute for the detailed research into the development of the European economy which he had neglected to undertake. This judgment lay behind all his remarks on Proudhon's methodology and approach to history in the Système. He was convinced that Proudhon was playing intellectual games to disguise his lack of historical knowledge and unoriginality as a political economist. In short, Marx believed he had detected something fraudulent at the core of the Système, and set out -- not without a certain vindictiveness -- to expose it. This was another reason for the harsh and combative tone in which The Poverty of Philosophy was composed.

Although he went to some lengths to expose what he considered to be Proudhon's "absurd philosophical theory", Marx was really more interested in the economic questions raised by the French socialist. As he pointed out, Proudhon had restated a variant of the classical labour theory of value which had been advanced previously by English 'utopian' socialist economists (Utenites and neo-Ricardians

47. Marx to Annenkov, 23/12/46, CME, 1, pp. 447 & 453.

like Edmonds, Thompson and Gray).⁴⁸ This, Marx concluded, was quite compatible with Sismondian economic theory, indeed, Sismondi and the French socialists influenced by him had employed much the same arguments as these English socialists. But was it compatible with Ricardian economics as rigorously developed by Ricardo himself? And if not, who was right, Ricardo or the socialists? Marx answered "No" to the first of these questions, and "Ricardo" to the second. In consequence, the economic half of his book -- the more substantial and less polemical part of the work -- represented, in essence, a Ricardian critique of 'utopian' socialist economic theory, with Proudhon the exemplar of the latter school. The Poverty of Philosophy was thus another stage in Marx's quest for a new socialist political economy, built on, but transcending, liberal economics.

He developed seven lines of attack, inveighing primarily against Proudhon's methodology, against his 'Idealist' approach to history, and against his attempt to rewrite the Ricardian labour theory of value. These were the three main themes of the book. In addition, he disputed Proudhon's analyses of economic phenomena like division of labour, machinism, competition, and rent, and quarrelled with his attitude to the labour movement, rejecting his views on wages, strikes, trade-unionism, and on the non-involvement of workers in politics.

48. Marx, Misère, MECA I, 6, pp. 149-150; MECU, 6, p. 138.

He offered a reductionist critique of Proudhon's mutualist ideology as an expression of petty-bourgeois values and dreams, and, finally, he advanced a number of his own ideas as examples of what his opponent should have said but had failed to.

Let us now examine in more detail these criticisms of the Système. To start with, Marx marshalled several arguments against Proudhon's methodology.⁴⁹ Proudhon, he noted, claimed his book to be a synthesis of the best of previous socialist thinking and liberal political economy, a synthesis which had transcended the inadequacies of both. But in fact (Marx argued) there was only one way to improve on the Ricardian analysis of the 'natural' laws governing a free-market economy, and to develop the existing Fourierist/communist critique of the harmful consequences of the capitalist system: by making a more thorough investigation of the history of this system. The Ricardians had, by and large, contented themselves with abstract and deductive economic theory, while the socialists had merely combined a rag-bag of perceptive insights with adverse moral judgements. Neither of the schools had produced a comprehensive, detailed, factual explanation of the evolution of commercial capitalism and the emergence of mechanised industry. To be sure, Proudhon's book pretended to be such a study, but in Marx's estimation it failed to deliver the goods, giving only a highly abstract and schematic history

49. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 175-192; MECW, 6, pp. 162-178.

of the European economy and a pseudo-explanation of its evolution. Why was it such a disappointment? Because Proudhon had not realised the need to make himself a proper economic historian, because he had fought shy of detailed economic analysis, and because he had "borrowed from the socialists the illusion of seeing in poverty nothing but poverty" (i.e., he had not exposed the mechanism by which the impoverishment of the wage-labourer fuelled the capital expansion of industry).⁵⁰ He had fondly imagined he could create a dream of social economy by binding together a speculative philosophy of history, a socialist critique of poverty, and a liberal theory of economic growth. However, in Marx's opinion such intellectual conjuring tricks could never substitute for good solid research, and the Système had demonstrated once and for all the barrenness of this eclectic method. Proudhon's understanding of the nature of science was defective, he concluded, commenting that "science for him reduces itself to the slender proportions of a scientific formula; he is the man in search of formulas".⁵¹

Proudhon, of course, would have angrily rejected the accusation that he had merely stitched together some patches of traditional socialism and classical political economy. He believed he had transcended both by perfecting a new methodology

50. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 192; MECW, 6, p. 178.

51. Ibid.

and by working out an overview of the 'dialectical' development of European society. Marx therefore had to do more than denounce the Frenchman's book as a-historical, unoriginal, and unscientific. He had to explain in detail what was wrong with Proudhon's general approach to political economy, and why his dialectical method was a pretentious failure; he also had to critically examine Proudhon's adaptation of the a-historical concepts of liberal economics to illuminate the pattern of European social development. He tried to do each of these things in The Poverty of Philosophy: the first led him to evaluate what he saw as Proudhon's attempt to apply the Hegelian 'absolute method' to economic history, the second plunged him back into the morass of Hegelian methodology itself, while the third forced him to assess the validity of Proudhon's use of Fourier's 'serial law' to explain the 'necessary' evolution of economic theory and practice.

Marx's rebuttal of Proudhon's general approach to political economy cast some light on his allegation that the Frenchman was searching for abstract formulae instead of empirical knowledge. Proudhon, he observed, had contributed nothing new to the content of contemporary economic theory, so the only thing that distinguished him from the liberals was the extraordinary use to which he put their standard

52. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 178-179; MELW, 6, pp. 164-165.

economic categories.⁵² He had taken their concepts and theories ready-made but instead of treating them a-historically (as the liberals themselves did) he had arranged them in an order, and had asserted that, when the internal logic of this sequence was examined, an explanation of their genesis and growth would be revealed. He was thus claiming that there was an historical inevitability about the evolution of economic ideas, and that he found the sequential formula (or 'serial law') which elucidated it. But by translating economic history into categories and formulae in this way, Marx maintained, he had in effect reduced both history and economics to a kind of applied metaphysics.⁵³ Hegel had already tried this abstract and reductionist approach in the fields of law and religion, so Proudhon was only imitating his general method.

Marx thus established to his own satisfaction that Proudhon's Système was an exercise in applied Hegelian philosophy. How useful was this exercise? Not very, he answered: this "logic and metaphysics of political economy" merely transposed economic concepts familiar to everybody into a "little-known language which made them look as though they had newly blossomed forth in an intellect of pure reason"; the new language added nothing of value from an economic point of view,

52. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 178-179; MECW, 6, pp. 164-165.

53. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 177-178; MECW, 6, p. 164.

indeed it had the drawback of obscuring fairly simple matters by hiding them behind a "scaffolding of categories, groups, series, and systems".⁵⁴ To be sure, if one already believed in a speculative philosophy of history à la Hegel, then Proudhon had shown how economic theory and economic history could be integrated into this grand historico-philosophical system. But if one did not, then all one was left with was a sterile mental exercise which Proudhon had spread over 800 wearisome pages. The truth was, Marx concluded, that Proudhon's sequence of economic categories did not correspond to reality -- European economic history was in fact much more complicated than his schema which played fast and loose with chronology.⁵⁵

Proudhon, though, had not just arranged the major concepts of liberal political economy in a sequence, he had arranged them in a 'dialectical series', and had argued that the 'contradictions' inherent in each stage in the series explained the ongoing, inevitable process of European history. Marx, while attracted to the idea that each epoch of European economic history had been beset by internal antagonisms and tensions which impelled further change, quickly came to the conclusion that Proudhon's proffered 'dialectical series' and 'economic contradictions' were, as he put it, "not history but old Hegelian junk".⁵⁶ He did not want to dismiss the dialectical

54. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 178-179; MECW, 6, p. 165.

55. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 179; MECW, 6, p. 165.

56. Marx to Annenkov, 28/14/46, CME, 1, p. 449.

method as complete nonsense because he suspected there was something valuable which could be extracted and rehabilitated, but he was convinced Proudhon had made a mess of it, and that the 'series' he had constructed was bogus. The only way to expose this 'series' was to analyse in detail at least some of the stages and the transitions between them, and Marx (as we shall see below) did comment adversely on Proudhon's treatments of the categories 'division of labour'/'machinism' and 'competition'/'monopoly'. But before doing this he subjected to scrutiny Proudhon's dialectical theory.

He knew that Proudhon had read little or no Hegel and had learned what he knew about the Hegelian dialectical method second-hand from Young Hegelians in Paris. As a Doctor of Philosophy who had taken part in the Hegelian movement, he reckoned that he, on the other hand, was something of an expert on the subject. So he set out to prove that Proudhon was a rank amateur who did not know what he was doing and who would have been wiser to have left such esoteric matters to his intellectual superiors. Adopting a supercilious tone, he charged that Proudhon was operating with a highly simplified concept of the dialectic. For the Frenchman, he stated, every economic category (for example, monopoly or slavery) had two sides, a good and a bad: these merits and drawbacks taken together constituted for him the 'contradiction' in each, and he saw the task of political economy as that of figuring out how to preserve the good side of every category while eliminating the bad. His approach was therefore essentially static, and he had no

understanding of how, in the course of history, economic tensions were overcome or transmuted.⁵⁷ Marx also argued that because Proudhon's conceptual apparatus was so primitive, each of his economic stages turned into a kind of 'blind alley' from which he had no legitimate means of escape, and that all he did in the Systeme was to take a series of arbitrary 'flying leaps' from category to category. As a result, he claimed, Proudhon's supposed 'serial law' was a quite artificial and illegitimate construction, a strait-jacket imposed by fiat on European social history.⁵⁸ Having isolated what he felt to be the crucial difference between Proudhon's and Hegel's methods, he concluded trenchantly: "M. Proudhon has nothing of Hegel's dialectics but the language."⁵⁹

This critique of Proudhon's dialectic mixed fair and unfair comment. Marx was correct to detect an arbitrary quality in the transitions from step to step of the Frenchman's 'serial law', and he was also justified in remarking that Proudhon made a much better job of establishing economic 'contradictions' than analysing how they had subsequently developed. On the other hand, he was in error when he claimed Proudhon had no notion of 'dialectical synthesis' -- in fact the idea was

57. Misère, MEGA I, 6, pp. 176-179 & 181; MECW, 6, pp. 162-165 and 167.

58. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 182; MECW, 6, p. 168.

59. Ibid.

discussed explicitly in the text of the Système -- and he also misrepresented the work when he alleged that each category in the 'series' was presented as an 'antidote' overcoming the 'drawbacks' of the previous stage. In fact, Proudhon suggested that later epochs had produced no more than palliatives for the fundamental economic problems (like poverty, unemployment, usury, speculation, etc.,) which had emerged early in the development of capitalism. Some of the remedies tried he judged to have been quite ineffective (e.g., efforts to dump goods abroad at the expense of trading partners in order to achieve a favourable balance of trade) while others were positively harmful (e.g., increased state intervention in the economy). Indeed he believed that none of the major 'contradictions' of the capitalist system would be properly resolved until it had been replaced by mutualism. Moreover, Marx revealed that his own knowledge of Hegel was not as good as he pretended: he foisted on Hegel the simplistic 'thesis-antithesis-synthesis' interpretation of the dialectic popularised by the Young Hegelians. In this respect both he and Proudhon were equally at fault, but Proudhon had at least tried to develop the notion of 'dialectical synthesis' by combining it with the idea of a 'serial law', which was -- as far as I know -- an original, if not strikingly successful, intellectual move.

Marx was thus not entirely on firm ground in his critique of Proudhon's dialectic. But he had little trouble in proving the inadequacy of Proudhon's arrangement of economic

concepts as a kind of logical series. He did so by invoking historical examples to show up the arbitrary nature of the sequence. For example, Proudhon's fifth, sixth and seventh epochs were 'taxation', 'balance of trade' and 'credit', and he seemed to be arguing that increasing state intervention in the economy and heavier taxation in the seventeenth century had stimulated unprecedented attempts by entrepreneurs to seize export markets, and that the ultimate failure of this strategy had promoted the creation of new credit institutions designed to encourage trade and manufacturing. Marx considered this vague, unsubstantiated, and at odds with well-known facts. How, he inquired, could Proudhon reconcile his generalisations with the evidence that the English bourgeoisie, attaining a measure of political power in 1688, rushed through parliament in one go a new tax system, protective duties, and a system of public credit?⁶⁰ And as for the last triad in Proudhon's series (property, communism and population), Marx simply could not bring himself to believe that any reader could take the alleged logico-historical development seriously.⁶¹ The basic problem with the whole idea of the 'series', he argued, was that it resulted in an excessively abstract and one-dimensional approach to economic history. Events which had occurred simultaneously were placed in a linear progression, which gave a

60. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 211; MECW, 6, p. 196.

61. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 212; MECW, 6, p. 197.

62. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 180; MECW, 6, pp. 166-167.

highly distorted impression of the social structure.⁶² Marx obviously felt that he had a better sense than Proudhon of the complicated structure of contemporary capitalism, and he was disappointed with the Système because, despite its methodological pretensions, it had taken him not an inch further in his attempt to build up a detailed picture of the intricate mechanisms at work in the European economy. So, notwithstanding Proudhon's claims, Marx wrote to Annenkov, he had failed to "comprehend the social system of today in its engrènement".⁶³

There was one other aspect of Proudhon's methodology to which Marx took exception. He contended that Proudhon, contrary to his expressed desire to make political economy historical, still used the concepts of economic theory in a highly abstract and a-historical manner. He pointed to Proudhon's discussion of the genesis of exchange-value to illustrate his point; this, he maintained, was a sort of deductive speculation in the manner of Smith and Ricardo, and failed to enter into the "genealogical details" required for an adequate history of the different phases through which European commerce had developed since the Middle Ages. Instead of examining the available sources on the early economic history of Europe, Proudhon had merely taken the easy way

62. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 180; MECW, 6, pp. 166-167.

63. Marx to Annenkov, 28/14/46, CME, 1, p. 447.

to refuting Proudhon's historical idealism.

Proudhon, no contender, was guilty of much the same kind of error in his approach to history as were Young Hegelians like Bauer and Ruge. In both cases the influence of Hegel had been regrettable. Although lacking Hegel's own detailed and scholarly knowledge of the history of European ideas, these French and German epigones had aspired, like Hegel, to explain all past events by fitting them into an abstract and teleological philosophical framework. This had led them to overemphasise intellectual history at the expense of economic and social history, and had committed them to a belief in historical inevitability which was non-empirical in method and highly questionable. For example, Proudhon had seen competition "a necessity of the human soul, in partibus infidelium", and had failed to comprehend that the competitive spirit had become dominant in France only in the nineteenth century -- he had conveniently forgotten, Marx pointed out, the existence of men like Colbert.⁶⁶ Whether Proudhon's 'Providence' was divine or no was of little interest to Marx; he condemned this 'philosophical' approach to history as "doctrinaire" a priorism. "Nothing is easier", he wrote laconically to Annenkov, "than to invent mystical phrases, that is to say, phrases which lack common sense".⁶⁷

66. Misère, MEGA 1, 4, p. 257; ibid., 1, p. 252.

67. Marx to Annenkov, 29/12/48, MEGA 1, 4, p. 252.

rejected Proudhon's view of European history because it was schematic, teleological, and inevitabilist, and because it portrayed ideas as the prime motor of social change.

In his letter to Annenkov and in The Poverty of Philosophy, Marx sketched his own 'materialist' approach to history in a trenchant and summary manner, thereby turning it into a form of economic determinism.⁶⁸ There can be no doubt that the theory as formulated in 1847 had become a simpler, cruder (but also clearer) doctrine than that proposed in the fragmentary The German Ideology. Whether this resulted from a change of mind on Marx's part is difficult to say. Arguably Marx, who was now preoccupied with social and economic problems and believed that the economic history of Europe offered a key to the nature of contemporary society, had indeed been converted to economic determinism. To be sure, he was again interested in the feasibility of a 'dialectical' (and hence non-monist) approach to explaining social change -- Proudhon's books (the Création as much as the Système) had revived his earlier inclinations in this direction -- but he can hardly be said to have worked out anything concrete, nor would he until the late 1850s, when he entered a new stage in his intellectual career.⁶⁹ Although class struggles were mentioned

68. Misère, MEGA I, 6, pp. 179-180; MECW, 6, pp. 165-166; Marx to Annenkov, 28/12/46, CMC, 1, pp. 447-449.

69. Marx, Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie, 2 vols., Berlin, Dietz, 1953.

several times in The Poverty of Philosophy, the book offered no alternative 'dialectical' theory of economic evolution to replace Proudhon's defective account. So while some germs of Capital may no doubt be found in Marx's economic writings before 1848, these lacked the methodological sophistication of the later chef d'oeuvre. Moreover, in his extreme hostility to 'philosophy' in the late 1840s, Marx appears to have neglected the finer insights of the Theses on Feuerbach and The German Ideology, lapsing into a less nuanced interpretation of the interaction between men and their environment. He was now ready to adopt causal terminology and look on human thoughts and actions as straightforward results of socio-economic determinants.

Because of its clarity and simplicity this new approach to history was more suited to propaganda, and from the spring of 1846 Marx was more concerned with political action and propaganda than scholarship. In this respect the decision to form the Correspondence Committee had been crucial, partly because it was conceived as the embryo of a political party, partly because its immediate aims were propaganda and communication rather than further theorising. Marx and Engels were getting a little tired of pure theory -- they wanted to make contact with real workers and influence their ideology.⁷⁰

70. Their desire to become political organisers as well as theorists was one reason why Marx and Engels created the Comité de correspondance communiste (which they always thought of as the potential nucleus of a political party) to seek contacts with leaders of working-class organisations with some 'mass' support (such as Harney and Cabet). It later led them to join The Communist League.

Engels had always been less academic than his friend, but now Marx too was becoming -- temporarily, although this phase of his career would last until about 1850 -- more of an activist and less of an intellectual. It seems reasonable to suppose that this change of attitude had some effect on his views, rendering them sharper but cruder. If so, then we may conclude that the deterministic version of the materialist conception of history set out in The Poverty of Philosophy, did faithfully reflect Marx's opinion in 1847, and that he was berating Proudhon for, among other things, not being an economic determinist and a philosophical materialist.

Marx was thus as highly critical of Proudhon's approach to history as he was of the Frenchman's ideas on methodology and metaphysics. He was equally severe on the economic theory which Proudhon saw as the foundation of the Système. He devoted the first half of his book to the one important topic he had glossed over in his letter to Annenkov: the theory of 'constituted value' which Proudhon had offered as his substantial and original contribution to socialist political economy, and as the principle upon which a mutualist society could be constructed. Proudhon's theory was in fact simple enough. By 'constituted value' he meant 'value determined by labour-time', and he advocated a pricing system whereby all commodities would exchange at fixed retail prices reflecting their costs of production (he assumed that these production costs could all be calculated in terms of units of labour-time, since even machinery and raw materials had to be built, extracted, or grown

by men). If prices were determined in this way, he argued, all commercial transactions would be free and fair, and there would be no exploitation of wage-labourers because these would be paid according to the number of hours they put in. He therefore believed that his theory of value laid the conceptual groundwork, for the first time ever, of an economic system which would function in a moral and just manner, and he interpreted European economic history as a series of preparatory stages rendering possible the eventual creation of a mutualist economy based on 'constituted value'.⁷¹

Marx considered all this to be 'pie-in-the-sky' utopianism, impracticable and theoretically unsound to boot. He himself, as a result of his reading in English political economy and economic history, had now come to the conclusion that Ricardo's analysis of the laws governing the contemporary economy was, in essentials, accurate and illuminating. Whereas he had once objected to Ricardo's 'cynicism', he was now prepared to defend it as an objective expression of the facts and to contrast favourably Ricardo's empirical and scientific approach to economics with the woolly-minded 'humanitarianism' of French liberals like Droz, Blanqui and Rossi.⁷² Marx, then, was a fairly orthodox Ricardian when he wrote The Poverty of Philosophy, and the more strictly economic part of the book

71. Proudhon, Système des contradictions économiques, vol. 1, pp. 77-83, 113 & 133-134, vol. 2, pp. 397-398 & 410-412.

72. Misère, MEGA I, 6, p. 136; MECW, 6, p. 125.

represented a critique of 'utopian' socialist economic theory from a Ricardian point of view. Actually, Marx had two main aims: to demonstrate that Proudhonian economics, its author's claims notwithstanding, was in no way original; and to provide a comprehensive critique of Proudhon's attempt to modify the Smithian labour theory of value and make it the basis of a new egalitarian system of prices and wages. Proudhon, he claimed, had merely reproduced and exacerbated certain confusions in Smith's work which Ricardo had cleared up, and although he had read Ricardo, he had, like other early socialist economists in France and England, misunderstood and misrepresented his theories. As far as Marx was concerned, the new socialist political economy had to be erected on the foundations laid by Ricardo, while Proudhon's work was, in essence, pre-Ricardian. He set out to prove this judgment by siting the Frenchman's ideas in the history of post-Smithian political economy, and by demolishing his interpretation of the classical theory of value.

He went to some lengths to prove Proudhon's lack of originality as an economic theorist. Proudhon had claimed that classical liberal value theory, centred round the concepts of 'use-value' and 'exchange-value', was unacceptable because it left unresolved the opposition or 'contradiction' between these two categories, and he had offered his notion of 'constituted value' as the way of overcoming the difficulty. In reply Marx first quoted Lauderdale and Sismondi to show that Proudhon was

wrong to claim that he was the first to detect this alleged 'contradiction', and then went on to reject the antithesis as a futile abstraction.⁷³ The duality of use- and exchange-value, he contended, was an accurate and useful mirror of economic life; moreover, Proudhon was wrong to see a conflict between them, because exchange-value, the result in part of the interaction of supply and demand, took into account the consumers' estimates of a product's utility. Exchange-value also took into account costs of production, added Marx, whereas Proudhon's 'constituted value' ignored market forces entirely and concentrated exclusively on the factor of costs. It thus focussed excessively on one aspect of the picture and failed to give a comprehensive account of the other elements at work. In a word, Proudhon's 'constituted value' was a 'costs of production' theory of value in disguise, and as such was plainly inadequate.⁷⁴ In any case, the Proudhonian theory of 'constituted value' was in Marx's eyes no more than a variant on Smith's and Ricardo's labour theory of value. He compared Proudhon's and Ricardo's versions, much to the Frenchman's detriment, praising the scientific character of Ricardo's work in contrast to Proudhon's rhetoric. He had two things against Proudhon's formulation: that it was expressed in abstract and periphrastic language, and that Proudhon followed Smith rather

73. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 124; MECW, 6, p. 114.

74. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 130-131 & 139; MECW, 6, pp. 120-121 & 128.

than Ricardo where the British economists had differed. In fact, Marx argued, Smith's version was confused: "Adam Smith takes as the measure of value, now the labour-time needed for the production of a commodity, now the value of labour. Ricardo exposes this error by showing clearly the disparity of these two ways of measuring".⁷⁵ The value of labour, Marx, continued, was expressed in wages, and these fluctuated according to the cost of worker-subsistence and the supply/demand curve in the labour market, so they were unsatisfactory as a general, fixed standard of value. Proudhon had ignored this, despite the fact that Ricardo had clearly pointed to the problem, because he was intent on drawing egalitarian consequences from the theory; however, whatever his motives he was wrong to do so, and his whole argument was undercut as a result.⁷⁶

Marx detected another unacknowledged debt to Sismondi in Proudhon's writings. Sismondi, he claimed, had seen in the discrepancy between 'exchange-value' and 'value constituted by labour-time' the root of all the injustices, disruptions and difficulties characteristic of modern industry and commerce; and since this was the central insight underlying Proudhon's theory of economic 'contradictions' his work was in reality no more than a development of Sismondi's theory. And if Proudhon was basically a Sismondian, he was liable to the objection

75. *Ibid.*, MEGA I, 6, p. 139; MECW, 61, p. 128.

76. *Ibid.*, MEGA I, 61, p. 138; MECW, 6, p. 127.

levelled a Sismondi (in Marx's opinion with justice) by the liberals: that he was trying to bring back one aspect of a primitive economy without its other elements, and hence was a naive and hesitant reactionary.⁷⁷

Furthermore, Marx claimed that Proudhon, in attempting to draw from classical liberal theory the elements of an egalitarian theory of value and wages, was doing no more than echo the ideas advanced in the 1820s and 1830s by various neo-Ricardian and Owenite English socialists, for example Thomas Hodgskin in Political Economy (1827), Thomas Edmonds in Practical Moral and Political Economy (1828), William Thompson, An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth (1824), and John Bray, Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy (1839).⁷⁸ Of these writers Bray had developed in most detail the 'labour-time' theory of wages and prices, and had advocated the creation of 'labour bazaars' where workers could exchange their products for others costing the same amount of labour-hours. English Owenites

77. Ibid., MEGA 1, 6, pp. 146-149; MECW, 6, pp. 135-137.

78. Ibid., MEGA 1, 6, p. 150; MECW, 6, p. 138; Thomas Hodgskin, Popular Political Economy, Four Lectures Delivered at the London Mechanics Institution, London, Tait, 1827; William Thompson, An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth most conducive to human happiness, applied to the newly proposed system of voluntary equality of wealth, London, Longman, etc., 1824; Thomas R. Edmonds, Practical Moral and Political Economy, or, the government, religion, and institutions most conducive to individual happiness and to national power, London, Effingham & Wilson, 1828; John Bray, Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy, or the Age of Right and the Age of Right, Leeds, Green, 1839.

had on various occasions tried to put Bray's theory into effect. Marx informed Proudhon, but all these "equitable-labour-exchange-bazaars" had collapsed, several of them ending in "scandalous failures" after absorbing much capital from hard-earned workers' savings.⁷⁹ He quoted extensively from Bray to demonstrate that the English socialist had fully anticipated Proudhon's ideas, and then suggested that the real difference between Bray and Proudhon was that the former had been more modest: instead of proclaiming his brand of mutualism to be "the last word on behalf of humanity" he had merely proposed it as a temporary measure suitable for the transitional stage between capitalism and communism. Marx made it quite clear that while Bray's theories were as impractical as Proudhon's, the English neo-Ricardian seemed to him a far more sympathetic figure who warranted more attention than the Frenchman.⁸⁰

But why was the 'labour-time' version of the labour theory of value so erroneous and impossibly idealistic? Marx's main argument echoed Ricardo's critique of Smith. Labour, he pointed out, was itself a commodity with an exchange-value expressed in wages, and wages fluctuated according to the state of the labour-market, the cost of food and other necessities, and the competition afforded craftsmen by the new machine.

79. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 157; MECU, 6, p. 144.

80. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 150-157; MECU, 6, pp. 138-141.

technology. This last factor he rated as particularly important, and he stressed that the value of labour during an industrial revolution was continually depreciated by new inventions. It was quite obvious, he concluded, that the 'value of labour' was inherently unstable, and that it was therefore quite inappropriate to try and make it a fixed standard.⁸¹ He offered a second, more technical argument against Proudhon's theory of value, suggesting that Proudhon, by proposing 'labour notes' as the mutualist currency, had revealed his ignorance of the nature and function of money. Whereas Proudhon had tried to prove that every commodity could in principle function as money (if assessed by its cost of production), Marx claimed that the only two commodities employed successfully as money in a modern economy were precisely those, gold and silver, whose prices were determined by supply and demand factors alone (their production costs being largely irrelevant). From this fact he concluded (following Ricardo) that the value of money necessarily reflected variations in the money supply and the demand for currency, so that it was misguided of Proudhon to try to find a form of currency immune to supply and demand. The Frenchman, he recognised, was searching for a device to make the relationship between wages and prices stable, and hoped to achieve this by fixing both prices (in relation to labour costs) and the value of money. Even if he succeeded in

81. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 156-157 & 174; MECW, 6, pp. 143-144 & 160.

doing the first, Marx concluded, he was doomed to failure by the second because the value of 'labour notes', if employed as currency, would fluctuate according to market forces. The cause of Proudhon's error, he added, was that he had mistakenly assumed that because specie was a commodity its value was determined in the same way as other commodities; this, however, was not the case, as he would have realised if he had remembered that specie was often replaced in circulation by paper money.⁸²

These remarks on monetary theory show that Marx, although he accepted the Ricardian 'cost of production' theory of value and believed, like Ricardo and Proudhon, that production costs could be expressed in units of labour-time, was becoming aware of the difficulties into which cruder editions of the labour theory of value ran. A third argument he advanced against Proudhon brought him close to abandoning the Ricardian theory altogether, although he appears not to have realised the full implications of his statements. Normally, he argued, the price of all commodities -- including labour -- depended on both cost of production (which could indeed be calculated in labour-time) and supply/demand factors. Proudhon's labour-time theory of value (at least as Marx understood it) ignored the latter component, that is, it assumed in effect that supply and demand were always balanced. In reality, Marx

82. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 158-164; MECW, 6, pp. 145-151.

argued, this was far from the case, and Proudhon was assuming an exceptional state of affairs to be the norm. The Frenchman, he continued, was ignoring the role of competition in determining the prices of commodities, and, since labour too was a commodity, he was ignoring the effect of competition on the value of labour-time. Unfortunately for his theory, Marx asserted, this effect was immense, not only because wages fluctuated according to the level of demand in the labour market but also, and more importantly, because machinism depreciated the value of labour. In a period of rapid technological advance like the present, he repeated, the value of labour fluctuated wildly in the short term but was being progressively reduced in the long term. Both forms of instability (each the result of competition expressed through variations in the relationship between supply and demand) rendered labour-time useless as a standard of value.⁸³

Cogent though it was against Proudhon, this argument was a dangerous one for Marx to use since it could easily be applied -- as in fact it was by Ricardo's opponents -- against the entire Ricardian 'cost of production' theory concerning the long-term determinants of the exchange-value of 'normal' commodities. Marx, however, did not so apply it, and he seems to have accepted at this time (and probably for the rest of his life) a modified version of the Ricardian theory of value.

83. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 173-174; MECW, 6, pp. 159-160.

Market prices, he believed, fluctuated as a result of variations of supply and demand around an equilibrium point, and the ultimate determinant of this equilibrium point for any commodity (special cases like specie excepted) was production cost. Following Ricardo, he called the equilibrium point the 'exchange value' of the commodity, and argued that the best unit in which to compute the relative exchange-values of different commodities was 'labour-time' -- money was clearly useless for this purpose because its value fluctuated according to supply and demand, as did also prices expressed in monetary terms.⁸⁴ Despite his criticisms of Proudhon, therefore, Marx had in no way abandoned the labour theory of value. His arguments were intended to show that the Frenchman had misused the theory, not that it was wrong in its essentials. The truth of the matter was that Marx never really thought through the logic of his own arguments against Proudhon.

When making the above three arguments Marx stressed that Proudhon's theory of 'constituted value' was *erroneous*, as the Frenchman said it was, as a general theory applicable to all types of economy including, naturally, contemporary industrial capitalism. His main purpose was to point out that Proudhon's account of value, whatever its official merit, was inaccurate as a picture of the way things actually were in the present. Proudhon, he suggested, had confused the ideal with the

84. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 173-174; MECW, 1, pp. 17-18.

reality: he really wanted to legislate a new system of exchange based on equal labour-time, but he had pretended that this ideal was the general principle already underlying all economic relationships. But in offering what was really an ethical ideal in the guise of an economic theory purporting to reflect and explain reality, Proudhon had simply confused morality and economics.⁸⁵ Hitching his wagon to the Ricardian train, Marx proclaimed unequivocally that economics was and should be a purely empirical, value-neutral, 'scientific' discipline concerned to describe economic facts as they really were. Objective knowledge must come first, moral judgments later. He had thus, under the influence of Ricardo, now broken completely with his earlier idea of a normative social economy along the lines proposed by Sismondi, Buret and Pecqueur. This intellectual choice was at the root of his intransigent hostility to Proudhon's enné mutualist political economy.

So far we have examined the three major theoretical divergencies (over methodology, philosophy of history, and economic theory) between Marx and Proudhon upon which the former seized in The Poverty of Philosophy. However, if Marx was out to destroy Proudhon's reputation as an economist and economic historian, he had to do more than dispute with him in these comparatively abstract areas. Arguments over whether the

85. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 143; MEGA, 6, p. 132.

Frenchman had misconstrued Hanel's notion of the dialectic or whether he misinterpreted the implications of the labour theory of value, interesting and important though they might be, were ultimately less crucial than the accuracy and fertility of Proudhon's account of the development of the European economy from the Middle Ages to the present. To be sure, Marx did try to discredit Proudhon by arguing that his stages of economic evolution failed to follow logically from one another in the way Proudhon had claimed; nonetheless, it was one thing to assert this alleged arbitrariness and quite another to expose in detail Proudhon's mistakes. Marx recognised this, and devoted part of his book to an examination of Proudhon's views on five specific topics in political economy: the division of labour, mechanisation, competition, taxation, and rent.⁸⁶ Here, he thought, was his opportunity to prove that the French socialist's empirical investigation of European economic history had been most inadequate.

Proudhon's discussion of the emergence of economic specialisation and the deleterious effects of this on the ordinary worker was one of the more substantial and impressive sections of the Systeme. After summarising the advantages which liberal economists had seen in the division of labour, he examined the other side of the coin: the dehumanising result, of "le travail parcellaire" on the craftsman condemned to

86. Ibid., REGA I, 6, pp. 193-221; MECW, 6, pp. 178-204.

continually produce the same goods or, even worse, repeat ad infinitum the same stage in a production process. He saw this fragmentation of manufacturing as pre-dating the development of machinism, and even suggested (somewhat paradoxically) that machinism was the 'antithesis' of this division of labour because modern mechanised industry reassembled into one unified operation "diverse particules du travail" which had previously become separated. Potentially, therefore (he argued) modern industrial machinery promised not only cheaper goods and higher living standards, but also the release of the worker from the hell of excessively specialised and monotonous routine work. Needless to say, he did not expect this promise to be fulfilled under a capitalist economic regime, but he confidently asserted that machinism, despite its current drawbacks, was one of many steps which had already been taken towards actualism. Incidentally, in focussing on industrialisation in this way, Proudhon demonstrated that his thought had evolved substantially since the mémoires on property, in which he had been concerned almost exclusively with an agrarian economy.⁸⁷

On the face of it there was much here with which Marx could agree, since he shared Proudhon's views on the potential good which could come from technological advances if they were utilised by a socialist society, and he had previously, in the Paris Manuscripts, sketched the harmful effects of alien-

87. Proudhon, Système, vol. 1, pp. 171-198, & vol. 2, pp. 367-369.

specialised labour in the new factories. He chose, however, to ignore what he saw as unsatisfactory aspects of the new system. His first charge was that Proudhon had distorted the existing literature on the subject, citing, for example, Quouson, Lemontey, Smith and others. Proudhon, through lack of data, had oversimplified the emergence of the new system. In particular, he had largely ignored the role of competition in this process, and had envisaged competition as a later stage in the development of the European economy. Thirdly, he had not understood the role of the early stages in the manufacturing economy, and had seen the new system as a separate economic stage, not as a continuation of the division of labour.⁸⁶

To substantiate his account of the emergence of the new system, this he set out the history of the creation of larger working communities in the centuries, stressed the importance of this new form of administration, and the creation of larger working communities since work was no longer done in small groups.

86. Misère, pp. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

in the smaller workplaces of master craftsmen and journeymen. The real division of labour, he added, had come with the industrial revolution: the application of steam-power had been the crucial breakthrough which had transformed the nature of work, supplanting the artisan in certain branches of industry and turning him into an appendage of a machine condemned to repeat the same simple monotonous tasks. Mechanism, properly so-called, was thus a product of the mid-late eighteenth century, and from this time the division of labour and the growth of the mechanised factory had proceeded hand-in-hand. Marx concluded that Proudhon was wrong to see division of labour and mechanism as two separate and sequential historical stages, and that this mistake nicely illustrated the perils of the Frenchman's abstract and a priori approach to economic history.⁸⁹

Marx had a point here, since Proudhon had glossed over the fundamental difference between the simple hand-powered machine-tools used by many artisans and the complex steam-powered machines introduced into the textile industry in Britain from the 1760s onwards. The Frenchman, most familiar with the semi-mechanised industry of Paris and Lyon (for example, the Lyon silk industry, which did not utilise power-looms), thought of large-scale mechanised industry as little more than an expanded version of artisan production; he did not

89. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 199-205; MECW, 6, pp. 165-171.

have the same concept of machinism as Marx, who had in mind the Lancashire textile factories Engels had shown him two years earlier. Marx had thus good grounds for claiming that Proudhon had not appreciated the full significance of the automated factory, notwithstanding his new awareness and acceptance of industrialisation. But when he censured the Frenchman for failing to perceive that "what characterises the division of labour in the automatic factory is that labour there has completely lost its specialised character", he was not only doing Proudhon an injustice, he was repeating the latter's claim that machinism was the 'antithesis' of craft specialisation.⁹⁰ Both men were in fact opposed to what Marx called "craft idiocy" (i.e., the specialisation by artisans in one 'line' of goods, a form of specialisation which destroyed all creativity and enjoyment in their work), but whereas Proudhon hoped that machinism would allow the artisan to abandon this excessive specialisation and again supervise the production of a variety of goods within his trade, Marx expected automation to quickly displace craft-work and artisans altogether. Their differing predictions reflected the differing realities of textile production in Lyon and Manchester.

Marx and Proudhon were thus arguing at cross-purposes over the consequences of machinism. Their dispute over the relationship between the division of labour and the beginnings of machinism was similarly the product of a misunderstanding, due

90. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 204-205; MECW, 6, p. 190.

in this case to a terminological confusion. Proudhon's conception of the division of labour was broader than Marx's; he meant by it any kind of economic specialisation (e.g., between farmer and merchant, or blacksmith and barrel-maker), while Marx was referring more specifically to the fragmentation of a single production process (e.g., garment-making). It was this difference in meaning which allowed Proudhon to see the division of labour as a precursor of machinism while Marx insisted that the two phenomena were basically one.⁹¹ Had they sorted out their terminology, the two socialist economists could have come to a consensus on the question, although Marx was probably justified in rejecting Proudhon's use of the concept as too vague and insufficiently emancipated from Adam Smith's 'pre-industrial' usage.

Marx's final retort against Proudhon's critique of the division of labour and machinism, however, was far-reaching in its implications. Moreover, it was probably in essence valid, although the Frenchman would naturally have denied this. Proudhon, Marx asserted, had ultimately gone no further than the "petty-bourgeois ideal" of the craftsman owning his tools and materials and creating by his skill a range of products; he had merely tried to update this ideal by admitting a degree of mechanisation into the atelier and by banding the craftsmen together in producers' co-operatives to ensure that they had

91. Proudhon, Système, vol. 1, p. 171; Marx, Misère, MECW 1, 6, pp. 200 & 202; MECW, 6, pp. 186 & 188.

enough capital to purchase any costly machines they might require. For the German communist this 'solution' to the problem of industrialisation was no solution at all; Proudhon had merely taken a step backward and proposed to the industrial worker that "he make not only the twelfth part of a pin, but successively all twelve parts of it".⁹² In a word, Proudhon's ideal was inapplicable and irrelevant to the automated, steam-powered factory-system of the future which was already growing up in England. Moreover, he had failed to see that this system, by drastically reducing the number of man-hours needed to create products, had made possible an alternative means of restoring the "integral development" of the human character which the division of labour and machinism (coupled with the growth of the commercial spirit) had destroyed. Proudhon, convinced that only through craft-work could the worker develop his aptitudes and personality, had rejected Fourier's insight that work could be attractive if it were made voluntary and varied. But -- Marx believed -- the automated factory, by cutting working-hours, could provide men with the leisure they needed to follow up all their other interests. For the first time ever they would have the time to cultivate both their minds and their bodies, and creative labour would be relieved from the crushing burden of being necessary and therefore compulsory, unfree and alienating.

92. Misère, MEGA I, 6, p. 205; MECW, 6, p. 190.

Because he had neglected this, Marx concluded, Proudhon had missed the one "revolutionary" and redeeming side of the automated factory.⁹³

Marx's discussion of Proudhon on mechanism thus brought to light a fundamental difference between Proudhonian mutualism and the new, allegedly non-utopian socialism which had begun to cohere in Marx's mind. Whereas for Proudhon the dehumanisation of the worker produced by capitalism could be overcome only by making artisan production co-operative and integrating new machinery gradually into the old patterns of skilled craftwork, Marx had now given up on the craftsman as a relic of a pre-industrial era. His cure for alienation derived essentially from Fourier, but he had discarded Fourier's agrarian orientation and accepted industrialisation as the invaluable means to future liberation. To Proudhon mechanism was still a threat, albeit one which could be overcome by mutualism; to Marx it represented a glorious opportunity.

Marx's disputes with Proudhon over competition, alienation and rent were briefer and more superficial, yet they too illustrated how the minds of the two men were diverging. At bottom Proudhon accepted competition as necessary and potentially beneficent despite its harmful side-effects when produced by an unrestrained greed for profit. He assumed that competition, because it increased efficiency, would be

93. Ibid.

essential to any future economy, and was concerned to build it into his proposed mutualist system. He quarrelled with Louis Blanc, for whom competition was the root of all evil, on the subject, and took issue with the Fourierists' desire to replace profit-motivated competition with 'emulation' (i.e., a form of friendly rivalry between work-teams). In short, he saw this feature of the contemporary economic system as not merely an attribute of capitalism but as a basic feature of all economic life which could be denied only with disastrous consequences.⁹⁴ Marx flatly disagreed. To see competition as an eternal economic necessity was to make a false and unwarranted assumption, he claimed, and moreover, it was predicated on an erroneous view of human nature. Proudhon had not recognised that human nature was being continually transformed as social relations evolved, but once one did accept the essential fluidity of human nature it was obviously absurd to assert that competition could never be abolished because it corresponded to something innate in man. Furthermore, Marx added, Proudhon had neglected the fact that laissez-faire capitalism was destroying itself as big capitalists progressively bankrupted their smaller rivals. His picture of economic relations was thus too static, and his a-historical treatment of competition was at odds with his claim to be presenting a 'dialectical' overview of the movement inherent

94. Proudhon, Système, vol. 1, pp. 205-246.

in the economy.⁹⁵

In his letter to Annenkov Marx made the same criticism about Proudhon's views on property. He pointed out that when Proudhon talked of property he was thinking of bourgeois property relations (that is, the modern form of private property) and that, ignoring feudal and communal concepts of property, he assumed that this bourgeois form was paradigmatic. Despite its eighth place in his economic series, therefore, Proudhon's category of 'property' was also a-historical, and he had no real grasp of how the nature of property had evolved over the centuries.⁹⁶ This judgment of Marx's was particularly damning, since he believed that the evolution of property was the key to changing social relations, and that if one failed to comprehend the history of property one could find the rest of social (and for that matter, political) history unintelligible. Thus Marx detected in Proudhon's discussion of property further and conclusive evidence that the Frenchman's comprehension of the past was inadequate.⁹⁷ This lack of a real sense of history, he added, had led the French socialist into absurd interpretations of events. For example, he had maintained that taxes

95. Misère, MECA I, 6, pp. 205-210; MECU, 6, pp. 192-195; Marx to Annenkov, 28/14/46, CHE, 1, pp. 452-454.

96. Marx to Annenkov, 28/12/46, CHE, 1, p. 452; Misère, MECA I, 6, p. 212; MECU, 6, p. 197.

97. Marx to Annenkov, 28/12/46, CHE, 1, p. 452.

on consumer goods had been introduced by the autocratic state as a means of relieving lower-class poverty and creating greater equality. In fact, claimed Marx, the tax on consumption had assumed its "true development" only since the rise of the bourgeoisie, and had become in the hands of industrial capital a way of exploiting the "frivolous, gay, prodigal wealth of the fine lords who did nothing but consume".⁹⁸ Proudhon had thus got the wrong end of the stick entirely, and in Marx's opinion his preposterous remarks provided a perfect illustration of the cavalier way in which he treated economic details. When an author revealed his contempt for his material in this way, the German concluded, it was hard to take him seriously, and he declined to discuss Proudhon's 'lucubrations' on the police, the balance of trade, credit, communism and the population question.⁹⁹

Marx was interested in the question of ground-rent, however, and here he leaped to the defence of his new mentor Ricardo against Proudhon's criticisms. He alleged that Proudhon's discussion of the determinants of average rent, which obviously derived from Ricardo, was a distortion of the Ricardian theory. His line of attack indicated once again the divergence between the two men's approach to economic questions. Marx, like Ricardo, was now interested in elucidating

98. Misère, MEGA I, 6, p. 211; MEEU, 6, p. 196.

99. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 211-212; MEEU, 6, p. 197.

the function of ground-rent within the contemporary capitalist economy, and in analysing its impact on other facets of the system (especially prices and wages). Proudhon, on the other hand, was concerned primarily with the morality of rent and its effects on rural life. Employing his accustomed method of setting out the pros and cons of the issue, he suggested that ground-rent had historically been an instrument of distributive justice because it had been a way of making available land to farmers lacking the capital to buy. Its main drawbacks were that it perpetuated large-scale private property (which in Proudhon's view was an obstacle to efficient farming -- he claimed that if large-scale private ownership were abolished, French agricultural productivity could be quadrupled), led to the victimisation of the peasantry by grasping landlords and money-lenders, and, above all, resulted in the progressive elimination of the small-holder and the depopulation of rural France. His conclusion was that while ground-rent had once performed a useful function it should now be abolished, and land should be redistributed among the whole population, thus creating a nation of small property-owners free to participate in buying- and marketing-co-operatives.¹⁰⁰

Marx had little sympathy with either the moral perspective of Proudhon's analysis or his fears for the future

100. Proudhon, Système, vol. 1, pp. 210-215, 236 & 255.

of peasant agriculture. He accepted the Ricardian theory of rent -- which suggested that the average level of rent was determined by the exchange value of agricultural commodities together with the productivity of the most marginal land in cultivation -- with the proviso that it applied only to commercial agriculture, and that Ricardo had been mistaken to offer it also as an account of pre-capitalist agrarian economies. Arguing that Proudhon too had slipped into Ricardo's error, Marx denied the validity of his attempt to use the Ricardian theory as an historical explanation of the origin of ground-rent.¹⁰¹ Nor was he impressed by the French anarchist's paraphrase of the theory itself: it was, he asserted, unnecessarily long-winded, and gratuitously dropped Ricardo's doctrine in "providential, allegorical and mystical phrases".¹⁰² Proudhon, he maintained, had simply failed to understand that rent, properly speaking, was possible only when landed property had been "mobilised" and turned into an article of commerce, and when the development of urban industry had forced the landowner "to aim solely at commercial profit...[and] look upon his landed property only as a machine for coinage."¹⁰³ Nor had he been right to challenge Ricardo's analysis of the long-term effects of the modernisation of agriculture on rent-

101. Misère, MEGA I, 6, p. 214; MECW, 6, pp. 156-157.

102. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 214; MECW, 6, p. 156.

103. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 214; MECW, 6, p. 156.

levels. Marx, accepting the logic of Ricardian doctrine, argued that improvements in agricultural productivity normally caused periodic falls in rent, as was borne out by the experience of England in the seventeenth century, when landowners "well aware of this truth" had, according to Petty, opposed agricultural progress "for fear of seeing their incomes diminish". He therefore concluded that Proudhon was wrong on empirical and theoretical grounds when he claimed that improved land-utilisation caused a continual rise in rent from which landlords always profited.¹⁰⁴ On this issue, as on several others, he believed that he had successfully convicted Proudhon of not doing his homework.

If Marx had been surprised and maybe a little saddened by what he regarded as Proudhon's incompetence as an historian and economist, he was shocked by the Frenchman's new -- and to his mind reactionary -- views on politics and the labour movement. Proudhon's proposed mutualist solution to the social problem was non-political and gradualist, and, following the logic of his new theory, he had become highly critical of any and all brands of French socialism which differed from him in these regards. There were numerous paragraphs in the Système which showed a pronounced aversion to communism -- (he was thinking in particular of Icarianism) -- as utopian, sentimental, vague, statist and authoritarian.¹⁰⁵ He in fact

104. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 221; MECW, 6, p. 206.

105. Proudhon, Système, vol. 2, pp. 258-259 & 266-267.

regarded Icarianism as an irrational secular religion, and attacked Cabet as a shallow rhetorician who mouthed idealistic platitudes about fraternity, but who had failed to confront the crucial questions of how the economy would be organised and the division of labour overcome in his egalitarian republic. Nor, in Proudhon's opinion, had the Icarians -- or, for that matter, the Saint-Simonians or Fourierists -- solved the equally important question of income redistribution. He himself believed that this problem was of fundamental importance: 'a just society could be created only if economic exploitation were ended, and this could only happen if all men were paid the correct value of their labour, which in turn would be impossible unless the production-cost of all products (and hence the 'proportionality' of values) were known. So he argued that any socialist worthy of the name had to offer a new theory of value and a detailed scheme for the economic reorganisation of society. None of his French rivals had, in his judgment, come close to doing either, and for this reason he made no attempt to hide his scorn for them, branding them as so many sentimental and impractical dreamers. He was quite convinced that his version of socialism was the only scientific one, and that Cabet, Considerant, Blanc, Leroux, and the other intellectual leaders of the French extreme left were idle and harmful word-spinners.¹⁰⁶

106. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 239-247, & vol. 2., pp. 286-287, 288, 293 & 302-303.

Proudhon was therefore an intransigent opponent of several French socialists for whose writings Marx had developed considerable respect despite his own disagreements with them on particular points, and moreover he had expressed this hostility in vehement, contemptuous and intolerant terms. To Marx the repeated onslaughts on communism in the book made its author appear not as a fellow man of the left disputing particular points of doctrine but as a thoroughly unsympathetic reactionary opposed root and branch to the basic premises and values of socialism. The problème thus made him wonder whether the Frenchman could any longer be reckoned in the 'progressive' camp. For indeed Proudhon was not just an opponent of communism, he had also repudiated the democratic-republican tradition. This was clear from his categorical rejection of the Parisian insurrectionary tradition, his opposition to working-class participation in politics, and, above all, from his stringent criticism of Louis Blanc, the spokesman of the socialist wing of the parliamentary Republican movement under the July Monarchy. Marx still looked on Blanc fairly favourably, and, though he thought them too timid, broadly supported the Réforme group and the other French republican-democrats. He therefore regarded Proudhon's attacks on Blanc with some suspicion -- fraternal criticism was one thing, but Proudhon seemed bent on discrediting the political leadership of the Republican opposition, and this was going too far.¹⁰⁷

107. Misère, MECA i, 6, pp. 192 & 222-224; MECW, 6, pp. 178 & 207-209; Marx to Annenkov, 28/12/46, CME, i, pp. 455-458.

Harx did have some sympathy with Proudhon's dislike of left-wing 'utopianism', but he had none for his distaste for 'public action'. Why, he asked himself again, had the Frenchman come out so strongly against lower-class involvement in politics? The reason, he suggested to Annenkov, was that Proudhon had lost faith in the strategy of educating and organising the workers before it had ever been properly tried, and had convinced him that an egalitarian society would eventually come about not through the painstaking efforts of individual socialists but through the dialectical movement of history.¹⁰⁸ He later concluded that the root of Proudhon's political rejection lay in his neo-Hegelian, inevitabilistic philosophy of history, and that he had succumbed to a kind of academic fatalism.

Harx found Proudhon's new attitude to the labour movement even more repugnant than his attacks on Republicanism. In his book the Frenchman had not, in passing, several contentious remarks on the subject of wages, working hours, factory legislation, strikes, and trade-unionism. His economic studies had led him to conclude that the struggles mounted by a few French workers' associations in the 1830s and early 1840s (such as the Lyon canuts' campaign for better piece-rates) had been counter-productive; by disrupting production, he thought, the strikers had only hurt their industry's sales, and so,

108. Harx to Annenkov, 28/12/46, CMC, I, pp. 456-457.

indirectly, themselves, and in any case general increases in wages were "impossible" in the sense that higher wages caused higher prices and hence real incomes remained static. He therefore argued that there were good economic reasons why strikes were illegal in France, and counselled workers to acquiesce in this 'necessary' state of affairs. The truth was, he added, that some wages were already too high and needed to be reduced. Given this negative attitude towards workers' efforts to gain better pay and working-conditions, Proudhon quite simply had no time for trade-unions on the English model. He was even averse to campaigns for legislation restricting working hours, deploring the English Factory Acts and the Guizot government's child-labour law. "Tout ce que dans ces dernières années l'on a tenté en France et en Angleterre, en vue d'améliorer le sort des classes pauvres, sur le travail des enfants et des femmes et sur l'enseignement primaire", he wrote uncompromisingly, "a été fait à rebours des données économiques et au préjudice de l'ordre établi. Le progrès, pour la masse des travailleurs, est toujours le livre fermé de sept sceaux; et ce n'est pas par des contre-sens législatifs que l'impitoyable énigme sera expliquée".¹

The sooner the workers realised these hard economic truths the better, he added, and praised a group of Bolton textile workers who, he claimed, had rejected strike action for the excellent reason that their employers had been constrained by market

109. Proudhon, Système, vol. 1, p. 164.

forces to no effect. Their wages, 110
 He was an ardent argument against unions,
 strikes, and the conviction that both
 entire freedom and the economic
 forces and the inalterable laws and
 of the world. He had, in a word,
 in the world the truth in 'laissez-faire',
 and the 'invincible hand' was con-
 sidered as a law of nature, but diffi-
 cult to apply to economic equilibrium
 and the capitalist sys-
 tem was conceived this
 historical gov-
 ernment which would be a union would
 have no reason to
 be considered strikes
 and the economic phenomena. He
 firstly rejected the arguments on wages and strikes,
 and the trade-union propa-
 tion and social legislation. In the last pages of The Elements
of Philosophy he wrote, in opposition to Proudhon's, his con-
 viction on unions and the movement of real wages.

113. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 224.

its exchange-value determined by its cost of production, i.e., the cost of the necessities required by the worker to keep alive and proper to his race, which meant that the 'natural price' of labour was the minimum wage. Of course favourable conditions in the labour market might allow wages to rise above this subsistence level, but whenever the supply of workers exceeded demand the 'iron law' would come back into operation and force wage-rates back to the subsistence minimum again. The labour theory of value when applied to labour itself thus revealed the basic cause of the poverty of the working class; it was, as Marx put it, "the formula of the present enslavement of the worker".¹¹¹ Proudhon, he charged, had failed to understand this vitally important fact which no amount of rhetoric about Ricardo's 'cynicism' could alter. "Doubtless, Ricardo's language is as cynical as can be", he commented, "To put the cost of manufacture of hats and the cost of maintenance of men on the same plane is to turn men into hats. But do not make an outcry at the cynicism of it. The cynicism is in the facts and not in the words which express the facts".¹¹²

To Marx, then, the 'iron law' of wages was a fact (he was to change his mind about this 'fact' over a decade

111. Misère, MEGA I, 6, p. 136; MECW, 6, p. 125.

112. Ibid.

later, but that is another story).¹¹³ It apparently entailed that rising inequalities were impossible, at least in the long term, and he accepted this too. Nonetheless, he was cautious in his conclusions on the question of the movement of real wages in the capitalist economy. It was a very "dialectical question", he remarked, whether the condition of the working class had improved financially as a result of the increase in productivity. There was no question that the working class had benefitted in the increase in public wealth, but it was not clear that there were to be expected according to Ricardo's theory, which stressed the oscillation of wages around a subsistence level as a result of competition. Nevertheless, broadening notwithstanding, Engels had said that the worker, while he might sometimes "suffer", could also on occasion "participate in the fruits" of the development of collective wealth. The conclusion, in reality, Marx continued, was that wage-labourers like the English textile operatives did well in periods of boom, roughly three years out of ten in his estimation, but then lost out again in recessions. Industrial workers' wages were thus inherently unstable, which made it difficult to calculate how they were faring in average terms over the long run. However, it was necessary to add into the

113. Engels added a footnote to the 1885 German edition of the History correctly pointing out that Marx altered his views on this question and that his revised position was to be found in Capital; MECW, 1, 9, p. 136; MECW, 6, p. 126.

He also took issue with the suggestion that a rise in real wages was impossible because of higher wage-costs on prices. He pointed out, however, a general rise in wages would not lead to a rise in prices, the reason being that labour-intensive industries would have less effect on those branches of production which are capital-intensive and highly mechanized, and that the latter, now finding it easier to make adequate profits than their labour-intensive neighbours, would be in a position to cut their prices. If wage rises occurred without further expansion of the industry, he suggested, they

114. Higgin, HERB 1, 6, pp. 173-174; MEMO, 6, p. 160.

would be at the expense of profits, and indeed this sometimes happened. But such up-and-down movements in wages and profits expressed merely the varying proportion in which capitalists and workers shared in "the product of the day's work" without in most instances influencing commodity prices. Frequently, however, wage rises resulting from strikes had stimulated the invention and application of new machines which reduced production costs and hence prices, and in these cases the net result of rising real wages was a fall in some prices combined with a maintenance or even increase in profits. Proudhon had therefore once again got his economic facts wrong and his theory muddled, and was mistaken when he claimed that wage rises resulted in inflation, not better living standards.¹¹⁵

In the course of this critique of Proudhon on wages and prices Marx had in fact come very close to suggesting that an expanding capitalist economy in which technological innovation was frequent could provide simultaneously cheaper goods, higher wages, and rising profits. His remarks implied this conclusion, but he did not spell it out in black and white. That he had the possibility in mind is suggested by his caution on the subject of the trend of English workers' real income, but he seems to have sensed that the conclusion was ultimately incompatible with the Ricardian 'iron law', and he was not at this time prepared to abandon this doctrine. In consequence,

115. *Ibid.*, MEGA I, 4, pp. 222; MECW, 6, p. 207.

he vacillated on the issue, and left it unresolved in the work. Marx still felt the need to dig deeper in order to fully plumb this tricky problem of wages, and he was to study the problem again in the months after the manuscript of the book was completed.

All he really wanted to do in The Poverty of Philosophy was to refute Proudhon's claim that strikes were pointless and fruitless. He did so by arguing (i) that strikes indirectly promoted technological progress, (ii) that they indirectly lowered price-levels, and (iii) that they were essential if workers were to bring out the deleterious effects of slumps on wage-rates.¹¹⁶ This defence of strikes, he assumed, was at the same time a vindication of trade-unionism, because in order to have these beneficial consequences strikes had to be effective, and the unions helped counteract the power which the employer normally wielded over his dependent employees. Trade-unions thus had a role in the economic system: at worst they helped mitigate the harm done by depressions, while at best they aided the worker in his struggle to partake of the benefits of economic growth.¹¹⁷ Marx thus had no time at all for Proudhon's hostility to 'combinations'; on the contrary, he was now an enthusiastic supporter of the English trade-union movement. He noted with approval that the English unions

116. Ibid., MEGA I, 4, pp. 222-227; MECW, 6, pp. 207-211.

117. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 225-227; MECW, 6, pp. 210-211.

were apparently surviving the present adverse economic conditions (strikes were difficult and risky during a depression, and shop stewards quickly lost their jobs if they showed signs of militancy), and indeed had progressed from the local to the national level, setting up a National Association of United Trades. Such workers' associations, he informed Proudhon, always started with narrowly economic aims (maintaining wages and influencing the labour-market), but then gradually evolved into organs of class solidarity uniting workers against repression by their bosses. In time, he added, the union members usually came to view the maintenance of their association as more important than the question of wages, and at this point the union took on a "political character". Hence in Marx's view trade-unions could and would play a major role in developing the workers' class-consciousness; through trade-unionism, as he put it, the proletariat constituted "itself as 'a class for itself'" and embarked on a political struggle against the bourgeoisie.¹¹⁸

Marx thus believed, like Engels, that working-class political action (the Republican movement in France, Chartistism in England) and trade-unionism were complementary, the two main facets of an emerging working-class movement which were in fact converging and becoming inextricable. "Do not say that social movement excludes political movement", he

118. Ibid.

admonished Proudhon, "There is never a (working class) political movement which is not at the same time social".¹¹⁹ Major evolutions in society, he explained, always took the form of political revolutions, and the emancipation of the oppressed class necessarily involved the creation of a new society. The lesson to be drawn from this was that both trade-unions and a political party were essential for the workers, and that Proudhon, in opposing both, was hindering the emancipation of the class he claimed to defend. In shrinking away from revolution, he concluded, the French socialist was repudiating the teaching of the very socialist science of society he had worked to create. Marx closed his book flamboyantly with a quotation from George Sand which he offered as "the last word" of this new socialist science: "Le combat ou la mort; la lutte sanguinaire ou le néant. C'est ainsi que la question est invinciblement posée".¹²⁰

We have now reviewed the main intellectual disagreements between Marx and Proudhon in 1847. Marx, it appears, was criticising the French socialist on five main grounds: that his 'dialectical' methodology was shoddy, that his overall theory of history was mistaken, that he had made severe errors in his interpretation of European economic history, that his views were out of date on key questions of economic theory, and

119. Ibid., MEGA I, v, p. 228; MECW, 6, p. 212.

120. Ibid.

that his gradualist and non-political strategy would hamper the Republican and labour movements. Marx's book was not in fact a very effective critique -- its tone was irritating, and too often the text became bogged down in details which caused the reader to lose the thread of the main argument. He had not yet properly clarified his own ideas on economic theory, and this showed in the work; nor, for that matter, had he worked out an alternative to the Proudhonian 'dialectical' methodology he scorned. And while he probably had a better grasp of European social and economic history than his opponent, he failed to present this knowledge in a systematic fashion, with the result that he offered no substitute for Proudhon's overly schematic account of the development of the western economy. Moreover, his brief statements of the 'materialist conception of history' were crude and polemical, and hence not as persuasive as a more careful and subtle account might have been. Even on the question of politics Proudhon had the advantage that his position flowed logically from his whole theory of mutualism, whereas Marx's criticisms were ad hoc, the products of emotional sympathy for democratic-republicanism and trade-unionism rather than the conclusions of a well-developed political theory.

So if Proudhon's opus was a misshapen structure, unable to construct a grandiose intellectual system, Marx's critique was a largely negative, and frequently angry, demolition job which was by no means fully successful. Marx had once said of himself an acerbic critic of neo-Hegelian philosophy, and

philosophy of history, and he had now demonstrated that he had a better grasp of Ricardian economics than any contemporary French socialist. But in two important ways The Poverty of Philosophy marked an intellectual retreat: he had apparently discarded the ethical-cum-psychological insights into the 'condition of the worker' which he had penned in 1844, and he had simplified the theory of history he had sketched in the following year. Furthermore, while he was undoubtedly making progress in accumulating disparate elements of the Weltanschauung which was gradually taking shape in his mind, he had so far failed to communicate this in an orderly fashion on paper. On its publication Engels informed Louis Blanc that Marx's book expressed the theoretical stance of the new German communist 'party', but the Frenchman could have been forgiven for doubting both the existence of such a party and whether its self-appointed spokesmen possessed the coherent ideology they claimed.¹²¹

The Poverty of Philosophy, then, hardly provided a comprehensive statement of 'marxism' to rival Proudhon's 'anarcho-mutualism'. Some of Marx's individual arguments were cogent, others were unjust, others again were valid but insignificant; together they made some holes in Proudhon's system, although, poorly marshalled, they lacked the effectiveness that Marx and Engels saw in them, and, employed only polemically

121. Engels to Marx, 26/10/47, EME, 1, pp. 493-500.

and destructively, they failed to provide a counter-ideology. However, Marx did not use argument alone against Proudhon. He also made an ad hominem attack on the Frenchman as a petty-bourgeois. Proudhonian mutualism, he alleged, was the ideological expression of the traditional lower middle classes in France (master craftsmen, small businessmen and fairly well-off peasant smallholders), and thus the 'contradictions' in Proudhon's thought reflected the mental and emotional dilemma of the threatened petty-bourgeois caught between the growing working class and the intransigent bourgeoisie.¹²² Logically, of course, this sociological reductionism -- whether true or false -- could not affect the validity of Proudhon's theorising, but psychologically it was potentially a powerful weapon. As a matter of fact the readership of Marx's book in France in the 1840s was so small it did virtually no damage at all to Proudhon, but eventually, decades later, this characterisation of the father of French anarchism as petty-bourgeois was to be a much-used weapon in the armoury of French socialists claiming to be marxists.¹²³ But though the epithet became no more than a slur, Marx initially offered it in good faith as an explanation, albeit uncomplimentary, of Proudhon's views. What, then, did he mean by characterising Proudhonian

122. Misère, MEGA I, 61, p. 192; MECU, 6, p. 178; Marx to Annenkov, 28/12/46, CME, 1, p. 459.

123. For example, Paul Lafargue's articles in L'Égalité and Le Socialiste during the 1880s.

mutualism in this way, and why did he do so?

For a start, he had been struck by Proudhon's fervent defence of certain values and institutions -- marriage, the family, the home, sexual fidelity, motherhood, personal property, etc., often regarded with scorn or scepticism in socialist circles. He had noticed too Proudhon's outraged attack on Fourier's alleged immorality in proposing a social community in which the passions, including the sexual urge, could be liberated. Marx himself was somewhat ambivalent about the more extreme French socialist critiques of bourgeois values -- he was, after all, a happily married family man who had internalised middle-class mores in his childhood and was accustomed to a bourgeois life-style -- but he accepted Fourier's ideal of total liberation and had also, under the influence of Engels, come to appreciate better Fourier's scathing denunciations of bourgeois social life as hypocritical, warped and vapid. So when it came to a choice between Proudhon's conventional values and Fourier's unconventional ones, Marx opted, at least in theory, for the latter. Proudhon was right, he commented, to dislike "sentimental socialist day-dreams" but he had only set up in opposition to "socialist sentimentality" his own "petty-bourgeois sentimentality", and this amounted to replacing Fourier's profound insights with a set of "pretentious platitudes" about the home and conjugal love.¹²⁴ And not only were Proudhon's values the socially

124. Marx to Annenkov, 26/12/46, CMC, I, p. 447.

conventional, he made no attempt to defend them rationally or "seriously" criticise the more libertarian views held by Fourierists and Icarians. There was, Marx concluded, something quasi-religious about Proudhon's doctrine.¹²⁵ he had previously regarded Proudhon as a true ouvrier; he now concluded that if the French socialist was indeed a "man of the people" in some respect, there was also a bourgeois side to him, which found expression both in his moral attitudes and his economic thought.

This duality in Proudhon's character and thought, Marx claimed, was reflected in his attempt to fuse, reconcile, or find an impartial media via between two class ideologies, liberalism and socialism.¹²⁶ Both Marx and Proudhon saw mutualism as such a 'third way', the only difference between them being that one did and the other did not consider this 'third way' viable in theory and practice. Why was mutualism a mirage? Because, Marx answered, it ignored irreconcilable class conflicts which were themselves an expression of fundamental 'contradictions' in the existing socio-economic order. He admitted that Proudhon had perceived some of these basic antagonisms but contended that he had not taken them seriously enough. He had assumed they could be resolved within the existing social framework, and had not asked himself whether

125. Ibid., p. 458.

126. Misère, MEGA I, 6, p. 192; MEGA, 6, p. 178.

the real solution might not lie in overthrowing the economic system which gave rise to them. Of course, Marx acknowledged, Proudhon did want some fairly substantial changes, but he wanted these to occur without any real repudiation of the existing order -- in other words, he desired to merge incompatible features of two different social systems into a synthesis (mutualism) which would supposedly equilibrate the antagonistic forces. To Marx's mind such a mixture of capitalism and socialism was a contradiction in terms, and Proudhon's notion of an economic equilibrium between profit-seeking and egalitarianism was a chimera. He concluded that Proudhon was looking for a 'formula' which could ameliorate social conflict without abandoning private ownership of capital, land and factories. Such a formula he was convinced could never be found, precisely because private ownership of the means of production was at the root of contemporary class conflict. Proudhon, then, was in Marx's judgment trying to reconcile the irreconcilable, and his plan for a mixed economy was just as absurd as the July Monarchy defended by doctrinaires like Royer-Collard and Guizot which combined King, Chamber of Peers and Chamber of Deputies into a limping, unsatisfactory and unstable compromise between representative government and monarchism.¹²⁷

Proudhon was thus a petty-bourgeois to Marx in part

127. Marx to Annenkov, 28/12/46, CHE, I, p. 458.

because he defended bourgeois values, and in part because he refused to make a clear-cut choice between capitalism and socialism. There was a third reason: his economic theories were in the tradition of humanitarian middle-class economists like Rossi and Blanqui, who accepted the principles of capitalism while denouncing its reprehensible features, thus showing that they had failed to grasp that the system could not function without evil side-effects such as poverty, unemployment and business crises. Proudhon, claimed Marx, simply wanted to have the good features of capitalism without the bad, and his notions of 'constituted value' and 'proportional relation' were nothing but the pious wish of the honest man who would like to see all commodities sold at a 'just' price: "in all ages", he commented, "good-natured bourgeois and philanthropic economists have taken pleasure in expressing this pious wish".¹²⁸ As an economist, then, he had operated with bourgeois ideas only, and had failed to found a new socialist political economy.¹²⁹

Thus the fundamental reason why Marx repudiated Proudhonian mutualism was that he saw the Frenchman's new ideas as an unhappy melange of liberalism and socialism. He detected in the Système des contradictions Économiques an unresolved tension between the Smithian and Sismondian sources of Proudhon's economic views, and suggested that in this respect the

128. Misère, MEGA I, 6, p. 148; MECW, 6, p. 136.

129. Marx to Annenkov, 20/12/46, CME, 1, p. 465; Misère, MEGA I, 6, p. 192; MECW, 6, p. 178.

book mirrored the intellectual split between the petty-bourgeoisie torn between a middle-class and middle-class perspective. Proudhon was therefore regarded as "scientific interpreter" of his time, and the Système an important work because it expounded, in a systematic and sophisticated form, the ideology of a social group with a crucial role to play in the impending revolution.¹³⁰ Proudhon had no illusions that his own writings would demolish Proudhonian mutualism once and for all; on the contrary, he was regrettably convinced that Proudhon's ideas would, at least in the near future, find a mass audience among the French artisanate. He was right: schemes for producers' associations, labour bazaars and credit banks were to attract a substantial percentage of French skilled workers in the years to come, and Proudhon himself would be involved in an *Union des Peuples' Bank*. Marx, on the other hand, convinced by his experience of Owenism in England that credit banks and labour bazaars were irrelevant nostrums, turned to establish contact again with the other wing of the French left: the revolutionary democratic movement. Still banned from French soil in 1845, he persuaded Engels to return to Paris with the *Deutsch-Französische* tributing review copies of The Poverty of Philosophy to every leading French socialist and utopian socialist, including Blanc and Etienne Cabet.

130. Marx to Arnoldson, 26/12/45, *MEW*, I, 3, 100.

CHAPTER 13

THE BOURGEOISIE, ECONOMIC QUESTIONS, AND EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS

Marx had finished the manuscript of The Poverty of Philosophy by the early summer of 1847. Written in French, the work was aimed at an audience of democrats and socialists in Brussels and Paris, so he was anxious to have it published simultaneously in France and Belgium and reviewed extensively in the left-wing press. He was especially keen to make an impact with the book because his efforts to find a German publisher for The German Ideology, the other statement of what he regarded as his mature views, had failed totally. After some delay, it duly appeared in both capitals, only to meet a wall of indifference on the part of reviewers. Marx resolved to overcome this by sending review copies to all leading French socialists. Engels, still in Paris although relatively inactive because of police scrutiny, was enlisted to make sure that men like Blanc and Cabet received their copies and to prod them into inserting favourable notices in their papers. This scheme, however, could not be carried out until November 1847, when copies of the Parisian edition were at last available for distribution. In the meantime, Marx and Engels concentrated on political journalism and on

expanding the Communist Correspondence Committee's network of contacts.

Engel's activity among the German artisan community in Paris helped to make this expansion possible. As we have seen the old League of the Just branch in Paris had by the mid-1840's split into several small groups, and in the fall of 1846 Engels had succeeded in persuading one of these to eschew Proudhonian mutualism. He had also established good relations with Hermann Ewerbeck, a friend of Marx's since 1844, when Marx had first made contact with, although refused to join, the Parisian League of the Just. Ewerbeck still had considerable influence on the more radical sections of the German community in Paris, and was now strongly attracted to Icarianism (despite disagreeing with Cabet's repudiation of revolutionary violence). Engels apparently persuaded Ewerbeck to become the Correspondence Committee's representative in Paris, and this helped give it credibility with the larger and more dynamic branch of the League of the Just in London which the Brussels' group had also contacted.¹

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1. Engels was at times critical of Ewerbeck's opinions and actions during these months, but despite differences over ideology and tactics the two men seem to have developed a close and amical relationship. Engels certainly regarded Ewerbeck as an ally of the Communist Correspondence Committee against the supporters of Weitling, Grün and Ariege among the German artisans in Paris. Engels to Comité de correspondance communiste, 23/10/46, CME, 1, pp. 433-434; Engels to Marx, December 1846, CME, 1, pp. 446-447.

The London branch, a semi-clandestine society concealed behind the German artisans' Arbeiterbildungsverein, was run by a trio of craftworkers, Heinrich Bauer, Joseph Mill, and Karl Schapper. By 1846 it had discarded its previous conspiratorial methods and had also largely repudiated the influence of Weitling. Its more militant members were literate, intelligent, and fairly well versed in contemporary socialist literature. Like Ewerbeck, they had been strongly influenced by Icarianism in the mid-1840s -- the Arbeiterbildungsverein still corresponded with Cabet and in 1845 had discussed his ideas enthusiastically in a series of meetings. These German artisans in London thus had political views similar to Marx's and Engels', that is, they were communists, democrats, and non-conspiratorial in method, but sympathetic to spontaneous violent insurrection by the working classes. Furthermore, Schapper and his followers had personal contacts with Julian Harney and the Chartist left in London, and supported the new Society of Fraternal Democrats.² All in all, the London branch of the League

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2. Christopher Johnson, "Etienne Cabet and the Problem of Class Antagonism", International Review of Social History, XI (1966), pp. 410 & 438, and Utopian Communism in France: Cabet and the Icarians, 1839-1851, Ithaca, Cornell U.P., 1974, pp. 246-247; Max Nettlau, "Londoner deutsche Kommunistische Diskussionen (1845) nach dem Protokollbuch des C.A.B.V.", Archiv für des Socialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung, X (1922), pp. 362-391; Ernst Schraepler, Handwerkerbünde und Arbeitvereine, 1830-1853, Berlin, de Gruyter, 1972, pp. 117-126.

of the Just looked to Marx to be just the kind of workers' society with which he needed to become involved if he were to popularise his ideas and translate theory into practice.

There were two difficulties, however. A minor one was that Marx was in Brussels and Engels in Paris, while the headquarters of the League was in London. The more major one was that Schapper, Moll and Bauer were suspicious of middle-class intellectuals. Marx tried to allay this by disclaiming any desire to dominate or interfere with the German artisans' organisations, and, probably with the aid of Everbeck and Harney, he persuaded the London branch to join the Correspondence Committee. An interchange of letters between Committee and League in the last months of 1846 and the first of 1847 served to break down initial distrust and to demonstrate the ideological concord between the two groups, so much so that by the spring of 1847 Moll visited Marx in Brussels and invited the 'Marx circle' there to join the League. Convinced that the League had abandoned conspiracy, Marx accepted with alacrity, and turned his Brussels group into a Belgian branch of the League. Engels was now also formally accepted into the organisation in Paris, and helped Everbeck try to patch up the divisions among the Parisian members.³

3. Engels, "Zur Geschichte des 'Bundes der Kommunisten'", op. cit., WERKE, 21, pp. 212-215; Engels to Marx, 9/3/47, CME, 1, pp. 468 & 472; Engels to Marx, 25-26/10/47, CME, 1, pp. 499.

By the early summer of 1847, the various branches of the League had decided to recreate an international organization, but on democratic principles. They also agreed that a new name was in order, and in consequence the first Congress of The Communist League was held in London in June 1847. Marx was unable to scrape enough money together for the trip, but Engels was there and played a leading role in the proceedings, helping to draft the League's new Statutes and writing a Communist Confession of Faith which the Congress approved as a provisional statement of its platform.⁴ Neither he nor the leaders of the London branch were satisfied with either the Statutes or Confession, however, and it was agreed to hold another Congress at the end of the year in order to revise the rules and programme. Engels undertook to prepare an improved version of the Confession in time for this meeting, which he wrote in September, entitling it Principles of Communism.⁵ He was still not satisfied with it, though, and sent it to Marx to improve. Marx apparently neglected to do this before the second Congress of the League (November-December, 1847) which both men attended. The Congress accepted Engels'

4. Engels, "Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith", MECW, 6, pp. 96-103. Translation of German manuscript reproduced in Bert Andreas (ed.), Gründungsdokumente des Bundes der Kommunisten (Juni bis September 1847), Hamburg, Hanswedell, 1969.

5. Engels, Grundsätze des Kommunismus, MECA I, 6, pp. 303-522; MECW, 6, pp. 341-357.

document in principle and instructed him and Marx to revise it quickly for immediate publication. Marx eventually finished the job in January 1848, the result being the Manifesto of the Communist Party.⁶

By the end of 1847 Marx had thus succeeded in his aim of becoming the spokesman and intellectual leader of a political party with a (small) mass membership. The League's membership in fact numbered under a thousand, divided between London, Paris and German cities like Köln and Hamburg and consisting almost exclusively of artisans plus a few middle-class intellectuals. It was in no way an organisation of factory workers, but Marx and Engels nevertheless saw it as 'proletarian' since they regarded handicraft journeymen as part of the working class rather than the petty-bourgeoisie. These artisans at least, they believed, were not looking backwards to the recreation of the feudal guild system but forward to the achievement of a democratic 'social republic' which would gradually build a new society based on communal, not private, property.⁷

During 1847, then, Marx and Engels thought of

6. Marx and Engels, Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei,; MEGA 1, 6, pp. 523-557; MECU, 6, pp. 477-519. The secondary literature on this well-known work is virtually co-extensive with that on Marx and marxism, and hence too large to cite here. One book of particular value, however, is Dirk J. Struik, Birth of the Communist Manifesto, N.Y., International Publishers, 1971.

7. Ibid., MEGA 1, 6, p. 538; MECU, 6, p. 497.

themselves as much as political activists as theorists. Nonetheless, in the year before the February Revolution in Paris, their thought did evolve in significant ways. Except for the occasional programmatic statement and some important unpublished manuscripts, the two men developed their ideas mainly in newspaper articles. While Marx worked as a journalist in Brussels, becoming one of the de facto editorial board of the Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung in the fall of 1847, Engels made himself the Parisian correspondent of The Northern Star, and later also began writing fairly regularly for the leftwing Parisian daily, La Réforme. Thus in 1847 Marx and Engels wore three hats, being at once theorists, journalists and party militants. Their views on politics and economics were now in close, although not perfect, agreement, but their location in different cities meant that they were in part preoccupied with different problems. Nonetheless, their intellectual development during the year before the Revolutions of 1848 may be conveniently analysed under the same four heads:

- (i) their general perspective on recent European history;
- (ii) their views on the new industrial economy; (iii) their opinions of other French, British and German socialists; and
- (iv) their interpretations of French politics, relations with the French left, and reaction to February 1848.

One of their main preoccupations was to understand the underlying pattern of recent political events. Primarily concerned with the last twenty years, they sought to place these decades in a broader historical context, which meant in

practice the last century or so. They had already worked out an overall perspective on modern European history in The German Ideology, although in that unpolished manuscript it had been set down in a non-systematic, fragmentary and somewhat ambiguous fashion. This perspective was sketched anew, although in broad strokes and simplified form only, in Engels' Principles of Communism in the Manifesto of the Communist Party. The key tenet of the theory was that causal link existed between three phenomena: the development of commercial and later industrial capitalism, the emergence of the bourgeoisie as a dominant social class, and the growing success of liberalism. Fundamentally Marx and Engels believed that industrialisation within a propertarian social system had produced a new middle class whose growing economic power had induced it to fight for political power under the banner of constitutional monarchism. As is well known, they were convinced that this new class would achieve complete control of each industrialising nation, but that the growth of industrial capitalism would gradually create a huge class of propertyless wage-labourers capable in turn of winning political and economic power.

In effect, then, they saw in modern European history a three-stage pattern: (i) the spread of commercial capitalism and small-scale manufacturing, accompanied by the rise of the bourgeoisie and the development of classical liberal theory; (ii) the emergence of mechanised, steam-powered

industry, controlled by a new species of big businessmen espousing Manchester liberalism and aiming at exclusive control of government -- when this group achieved its aims they considered the bourgeois revolution would be complete; and (iii) the growth of an industrial proletariat eventually destined to abolish capitalism and make a more rational, humane and egalitarian use of modern industrial technology. This is, admittedly, to express their perspective schematically, but the fact of the matter is that Marx and Engels did in 1847, for propaganda purposes, reduce their theory of history to this formula. The Manifesto is the best-known example of such simplification, but the same process was at work in their political journalism from this period. It seems to have been done deliberately, out of the conviction that the nascent communist movement needed no more theorising but rather good, hard-hitting propaganda attuned to a mass audience. They probably derived this attitude from Cabet, who was pioneering this kind of communist propaganda in France in the 1840's.⁸

At any rate, Engels argued in the Principles and Marx reiterated in the Manifesto that the central fact of modern history was the rise of the liberal bourgeoisie as a result of the development of capitalism and the subsequent

8. Christopher Johnson, "Communism and the Working Class before Marx: the Icarian Experience", American Historical Review, LXXVI, no. 3 (June 1971), pp. 642-689, and Utopian Communism in France, op. cit., passim.

harnessing of modern technology. Engels telescoped the process, and in one place simply depicted the British industrial revolution as the transformative factor which had created the modern bourgeois world.⁹ In his political journalism of these months, he softened this schemata by recognising the long, gradual growth of commercial capitalism and domestic manufacturing before the advent of steam engines and textile machinery, but he still associated the modern bourgeoisie (as opposed to the old Mittelstand) with the factory system. Marx, in the Manifesto, refined his account by distinguishing clearly two phases of industrialization: first the replacement of "feudal industry" by the manufacturing system run by the Mittelstand, and later, during the industrial revolution, the superseding of this mode of production and social group by "the silent, modern industry" commanded by the modern bourgeoisie whom he defined as "industrial millionaires, the leaders of whole industrial armies".¹⁰ This refinement, however, merely made it even plainer that Marx and Engels now saw the bourgeoisie as essentially the product of the industrial revolution, and, as such, different in a fundamental way from the older Mittelstand.

The bourgeoisie (as defined in the Principles and the Manifesto) was thus a very recent phenomenon, a newcomer

9. Engels, Grundriss, MECA I, 6, 13408; MECF, 6, p. 345.

10. Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei, MECA I, 6, p. 427; MECW, 6, p. 485.

on the European political scene. It therefore made no sense to speak of this class as gaining control of the state prior to the nineteenth century, simply because its industrial base was insufficiently developed before then. In fact, as we shall see, Marx and Engels regarded the 1830s as the decisive decade when the industrial bourgeoisie seized power in the most industrialized and progressive parts of Europe. It followed from this that it was the wrong time to suggest the gradual growth of some new kind of manufacturing from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century had been accompanied by the rise of this bourgeoisie. Nor could one rationally argue that liberalism, with its roots in seventeenth century England and the eighteenth century Enlightenment, was a bourgeois ideology. Again, it did no longer seem to suggest that the French Revolution identified the revolution to power of the bourgeoisie since the new class of industrialists had still been tiny in the 1790s in France and in any case had played no important role in the events of the revolutionary years.

In short, Marx's and Engels' definition of a bourgeoisie in the Principles and the Manifesto precluded it from arguing, as they had in The German Ideology, that Europe since the sixteenth century had witnessed the gradual growth of a new bourgeoisie capable of challenging the aristocracy and monarchy, and that the revolutions of 1848 and 1871 had been the culmination of this historical process. They could not have it both ways: either the rise of the bourgeoisie preceded and laid the groundwork for the industrial revolution,

it was a consequence of this. The texts of the Principles and the Manifesto seem to imply that they had perceived the problem and made their choice, opting for the second alternative.¹¹

Unfortunately, however, the matter is not so simple. Here we have run into a major terminological difficulty which Marx and Engels never solved satisfactorily, which plagued later marxists, and which has prompted numerous critiques of the Marxian overview of modern European history. Although it is often possible to discern its meaning from the context, 'bourgeoisie' is an ambiguous word in most of Marx's and Engels' writing in the late 1840's. They employed it indiscriminately in two contradictory ways: as a portmanteau expression to indicate all non-aristocratic, non-peasant property-holders (a common usage in French at the time), and also as a quasi-technical term (apparently of their own coinage) to mean only, modern big-businessmen, presumably the owners of large textile firms, the biggest mining companies, and the most modern iron foundries and metallurgical works. Engels was clearly using the word in this latter sense in the Principles and this too was its meaning in the Manifesto, where Marx was stressing the fundamental opposition between capitalists and proletariat. Nonetheless, this usage was exceptional in their writings during the 1840's, since in their

11. Ibid., MECA I, 6, pp. 527-528; MECW, 6, pp. 485-486; Engels, Grundrisse, MECA I, 6, pp. 503-509; MECW, 6, pp. 342-346.

periodically felt the need to make distinctions within the main social classes, but did not do so in a wholly consistent and steadfast manner. This meant, of course, that their analyses of recent history and contemporary politics sometimes lacked clarity. And, as we have seen, their older use of the term 'bourgeoisie' meant that a fundamental ambiguity vitiated their overview of modern European history.¹²

What, then, did Marx and Engels really mean when they claimed that the central fact of modern history was the rise of the bourgeoisie as a result of the development of industrial capitalism? It would seem that they meant two things: (i) that between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries a new social class had gradually emerged, connected with the growth of commercial capitalism and manufacturing outside the feudal system -- this Mittelstand, as its economic power increased,

12. Examples of the looser usage of the term 'bourgeoisie' can be found in almost all Marx's and Engels' articles, during 1844 and early 1848, e.g., Engels, "The Prussian Constitution", The Northern Star, no. 489, 6/3/47, reprinted in MEGA, I, 6, pp. 253-258; MECW, 6, pp. 64-71; "Our Status in Germany" ("The Constitutional Question in Germany"), unpublished manuscript, printed in MEGA, I, 6, pp. 1-10; MECW, 6, pp. 72-91; "Die Kommunisten und Karl Heine", Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, no. 79, 3/10/47, 2 pp., 7/10/47, reprinted in MEGA, I, 6, pp. 283-297; MECW, 6, pp. 291-306; Marx, "Die moralisierende Kritik und die kritisierende Moral. Beitrag zur Deutschen Kultur im Kampf gegen Karl Heine" ("Moralising Criticism and Critical Morality. A Contribution to German Culture in the Fight against Karl Heine"), Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, no. 92, 3 pp., 25/10/47, 31/10/47, 1/11/47, 2/11/47 & 25/11/47, reprinted in MEGA, I, 6, pp. 327-336; MECW, 6, pp. 312-340.

had gradually asserted its claim to political power against both aristocracy and crown, and had, in the process, created the ideology of constitutional monarchism; (ii) that between about 1760 and 1830 a segment of this class, a new breed of entrepreneurs, had employed modern technology to transform major sectors of the economy and thereby create a qualitatively new economic system, industrial capitalism. These industrialists had taken up the old middle classes' struggle for political power, and had by the 1840's made serious inroads into royal and aristocratic power in Britain and France.

Marx and Engels perceived a continuity between the political pretensions of the new industrial bourgeoisie and those of the old Mittelstand. They distinguished, however, between the moderate constitutional monarchism of the Mittels-tand, which recent events had rendered outdated and conservative in their eyes, and the rigorous, modernising liberalism of industrialists who found in Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus, Andrew Ure and Nassau Senior eloquent spokesmen for their interests. Just as there were different elements within the bourgeoisie (wide usage), they maintained, so there were variants of liberalism, some tougher-minded than others; the bourgeoisie (wide usage) nevertheless remained a class because of its ownership of industry, commerce and other property, and liberalism remained a class ideology. But the essential point was that the rise of the new industrial bourgeoisie was a continuation of the earlier rise of the Mittelstand, and that contemporary liberalism was merely a development of an

earlier ideology. Although they recognized that the meaning of the term 'bourgeoisie' differed from epoch to epoch, Marx and Engels still believed that the historical continuity between early capitalism and the capitalism of the industrial revolution made it legitimate to utilize the same label for several generations of entrepreneur and middle-class property-owner. On these grounds, they refused to relinquish the old, broader, common usage of the term 'bourgeoisie'.¹³

Given these distinctions between different middle-class groups and between a pre-industrial and an industrial bourgeoisie, it seems evident that Marx and Engels did not view the European 'middling strata' as homogeneous, despite their claim that property ownership united them into a single 'class'. Actually, they regarded conflicts of interest within the bourgeoisie (wide usage) as one of the keys to domestic politics in Western Europe. Engels was well aware of political splits and conflicts of interest within the French bourgeoisie (wide usage), as his reports to The Northern Star amply demonstrate.¹⁴ And in the Manifesto Marx asserted that go-ahead

13. Ibid. Also, Engels, "Der Anfang des Endes in Österreich" ("The Beginning of the End in Austria"), Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, no. 8, 27/1/48, reprinted in MECA I, 6, pp. 389-405; MECW, 6, pp. 530-536; & "Drei neue Konstitutionen" ("Three New Constitutions"), Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, no. 15, 20/2/48, reprinted in MECA I, 6, pp. 583-588; MECW, 6, pp. 540-544.

14. Engels, "Government and Opposition in France", The Northern Star, no. 460, 5/4/46, reprinted in MECA I, 6, pp. 29-36; MECW, 6, pp. 61-63; "The Decline and Approaching Fall of

businessmen were normally forced to struggle against not only the aristocracy but also "those portions of the bourgeoisie itself whose interests have become antagonistic to the progress of industry", i.e., against part or all of the Mittelstand.¹⁵ As Marx and Engels saw it, there were two main lines of division within the class: between the financial élite and the rest, and between the modernisers and the conservatives. Their own sympathies lay with industrialists against the financiers, and with dynamic, progressive entrepreneurs against all forms of traditionalism.

Indeed in 1847 Marx and Engels had surprising enthusiasm for the cause of the industrial bourgeoisie. The mid-nineteenth century was in their eyes a "bourgeois era", and they felt strongly that they were living in a bourgeois world. In western and central Europe, they judged, the middle classes were already in power or soon would be, and the bourgeoisie (wide usage), divided though it was, would control the destiny of Europe for some time yet.¹⁶ The bourgeois epoch had begun, Engels asserted, in 1830. He believed that year had been a turning-point in history because it had witnessed the

14. (cont'd) Guizot -- "Position of the French Bourgeoisie", The Northern Star, no. 506, 3/7/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 262-268; MECU, 6, pp. 213-219; "The Reform Movement in France", The Northern Star, no. 526, 20/11/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 350-356; MECU, 6, pp. 375-382.

15. Manifest, MEGA I, 6, p. 535; MECU, 6, p. 493.

16. Engels, "Die Bewegung von 1847" ("The Movements of 1847"), Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, no. 7, 23/1/48, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 397-398; MECU, 6, pp. 528-529.

July Revolution in France and the Reform Bill campaign in England, the two of which together had "finally secured the victory of the bourgeoisie".¹⁷ In "The Movements of 1847", Engels elaborated on what he meant by this bourgeois victory and sketched his interpretation of European politics since 1830.¹⁸

The most advanced European country, he argued, was Britain. On his reckoning this was the only country so far where the industrialists had secured the reins of government: the Reform Act of 1832 had allowed this to occur legally, and the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 demonstrated that they could force through their policies against a coalition of landowners and rentiers. By 1846, then, Britain had completed its bourgeois revolution, and this had also already begun in two other countries: Belgium and France. He had little to say about Belgium, but he seems to have regarded the government as under the control, since 1830, of a coalition of different middle-class groups, and by no means fully in the hands of the Belgian industrialists. As for France, the failure of the Republican movement to seize power in 1830 had meant that the government had fallen into the hands of the haute bourgeoisie, and the Guizot government currently in power was a tool of the Parisian bankers. The bourgeois revolution was therefore incomplete

17. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 389; MECW, 6, p. 520.

18. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 389-398; MECW, 6, pp. 520-529.

in France and Belgium, and Engels expected that sooner or later the industrialists of these countries would feel compelled to take power fully into their own hands. Other countries too had experienced in 1830 attempts by the bourgeoisie (wide usage) to seize power from the traditional ruling groups, he remarked, but in Prussia, Poland, Italy, Switzerland and elsewhere the established order had temporarily survived the onslaught.

Still, Engels believed that 1830 had obviously marked the beginning of a new phase of European history, and, after a period of reaction, the 1840s had witnessed further breaches in the old order's defences in Denmark, Naples and Sardinia. The year 1847 had marked a resurgence of liberalism on a scale similar to that in 1830, and the revolutionary bourgeoisie was evidently on the march again in Italy, Germany, Switzerland, France, America and even Russia. He was in full agreement with Marx's prediction in a polemic against Karl Heinzen that "an era of revolution" was approaching in central and southern Europe. But he recognised, as Marx also warned Heinzen, that it was no use hoping for social reform or even universal suffrage from this lowering storm: even in Prussia it would be a bourgeois revolution in which the lower classes would have at most a minor and subordinate role.¹⁹

19. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 389-390 & 394-396; MECW, 6, pp. 520-521 & 526-527; Marx, "Die moralisierende Kritik", loc. cit., MEGA I, 6, pp. 298 & 318-320; MECW, 6, pp. 312 & 332-333.

Marx and Engels, as Rhinelanders, were especially interested in the situation in Prussia, and reckoned that the demise of Prussian absolutism was long overdue. During 1847 Engels devoted several articles and unpublished manuscripts to analysing the German case. He was very sensitive to the difference between the situation in Prussia and that in France. Germany, he repeated again and again, was economically and politically backward, and the fundamental class struggle was still that between the bourgeoisie on one side and on the other a coalition of crown, aristocracy and part of the petty-bourgeoisie. The German working-class, he emphasises, was immature and divided, so that there was no chance of the country experiencing anything more than a bourgeois-liberal revolution in the near future; indeed even the bourgeoisie was relatively weak and timid, and while there was good reason to hope for a middle-class conquest of power in the next year or so, this was by no means a foregone conclusion. In the meantime, he suggested, German democrats and socialists would have to back up the liberal bourgeoisie in its conflict with the monarchy, and in particular urge it to make good use of its most powerful weapon: the right of the Prussian Diet to refuse taxes. If the Prussian liberals refused to compromise, he argued, they could use the Diet's financial stranglehold over the government to achieve a genuine constitutional monarchy, and potentially 1848 could be Prussia's 1789.

On balance Engels expected that this would be the case. But he was conscious enough of German economic retardation

and suspicious enough of the German liberals' lack of intrepidity, to have his doubts. In the spring of 1847 he answered his own question: would the Prussian bourgeoisie seize power? with the laconic response: "we shall see"; by January 1848 he had concluded that it had lost one battle with the monarchy in 1847, but that this defeat was only temporary and had served the useful function of preventing further compromise between Crown and Diet. Whichever side won, he was now convinced that a confrontation between the bourgeoisie and the "alliance of nobles, bureaucrats and priests headed by the king" was unavoidable before the end of the decade. "Now", he commented, "it is a matter of a life and death struggle between the two... We can therefore await the advent of this Prussian revolution with the utmost calm".²⁰

Why was Engels such a staunch supporter of the Prussian, and for that matter, the Russian, Austrian, Italian, Swiss, and Danish bourgeoisies? No doubt the main reason was the one he gave: that, as he read the evolution of European history, a period of industrialisation under the aegis of the bourgeoisie was an essential pre-condition for the development of a mature labour movement. In each country, he was convinced, a bourgeois

20. Engels, "The Prussian Constitution", loc. cit., MEGA I, 6, pp. 253-258; MECW, 6, pp. 64-71; "Der Status quo in Deutschland", MEGA I, 6, pp. 229-249; MECW, 6, pp. 75-91 ("we shall see" quotation, MEGA I, 6, p. 244; MECW, 6, p. 86); "Die Bewegungen von 1847", loc. cit., MEGA I, 6, pp. 389-398; MECW, 6, pp. 520-529 ("life and death struggle" quotation, MEGA I, 6, p. 391; MECW, 6, p. 522).

revolution would have to occur before there was any chance of a proletarian one, and at this period in his career he applied this stage theory of history in a rigorous and rigid manner. Still, the quality of Engels' enthusiasm for the achievements of the new industrialists makes one suspect that this ostensible reason was not the only one. It looks as though he also valued some of the results of bourgeois rule as intrinsically good and progressive. This becomes apparent when one examines some of the current events to which, as a journalist, he accorded his approval in 1847. The available evidence on Marx's attitude is more meagre, but his hymn in the Manifesto to the bourgeoisie's creation of "more massive and colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations put together" indicates that he too shared Engels' awe and admiration for that class' harnessing of modern technology.²¹

For both Marx and Engels, then, the bourgeoisie was above all a modernising force, and both men were emotionally committed to modernisation. This was partly because the practical inventions of recent decades -- railways, steam-boats, textile machinery, etc., -- had caught their imaginations, and they dreamed of using this technology in the construction of an egalitarian society from which hunger, misery and poverty would be banished. It was partly too because they loathed

21. Engels, "Die Bewegungen von 1847", loc. cit., MECA I, 6, pp. 397-398; MECW, 6, pp. 528-529; Marx, Manifest, MECA I, 6, p. 530; MECW, 6, p. 489.

traditional agrarian societies permeated with peasant customs, Christian ritual, aristocratic privilege, and authoritarianism. For all its faults, the bourgeoisie was in their eyes the destroyer of these archaic modes of life, values, and political institutions. They both stressed that bourgeois rule meant centralisation, the drawing of local communities into a national market and the imposition of a standard, efficient administrative machine throughout the diverse regions of a nation-state. Such centralisation, they averred, meant the introduction of rationality into everyday political and economic life, and they saw it as thoroughly inimical to the ramshackle, benighted conservatism of traditionalist monarchs. The glee with which they applauded the destruction of traditional society and the ancien régime comes out most clearly in Engels' article, "The Beginning of the End in Austria", in which he described with relish the inroads being made by commerce, railways and machinism into the economy of the Austrian Empire, and claimed that, as a result of these modernising forces, the political structure of Habsburg rule was also starting to disintegrate.²²

Engels' championing of modernisation at all costs led him to make some startlingly forthright judgments on contemporary political events. For example, he sanctioned French imperialism in North Africa, claiming that the conquest of

22. Engels, "Die Anfang des Endes in Österreich", loc. cit., MEGA I, 6, pp. 399-405; MECW, 6, pp. 530-536.

Algeria was "an important and fortunate fact for the progress of civilisation" and thereby abandoning the cause of the Bedouin which he had espoused in one of his earliest publications.²³ He supported too, the centralising impulse of the Swiss Diet against rural cantons of the Sonderbund, commenting that the victory of the 'radical' urban cantons in the Swiss civil war was a valuable step towards destroying a last bastion of "brutal, primitive Germanism, barbarism, bigotry, patriarchal simplicity and moral purity (and) immobility".²⁴ He sharply attacked the German petty-bourgeoisie's nostalgia for the guild system, even condemning his literary hero Goethe as a "philistine" for writing poetic lamentations on the decay of this class and its values. And he vindicated protective tariffs as, in Germany, a "progressive bourgeois measure" which would speed up the German industrial revolution.²⁵ Engels further saw the Polish and Italian nationalist movements

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23. Engels, "Extraordinary Revelations -- Guizot's Foreign Policy", The Northern Star, no. 535, 22/1/46, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 385-388; MECW, 6, pp. 469-472; cf. "Die Bedouien", Bremisches Conversationsblatt, no. 40, 1/1/36, p. 257; MEGA I, 2, pp. 7-8; MECW, 2, pp. 3-4.
 24. Engels, "Die Schweizer Bürgerkrieg" ("The Civil War in Switzerland"), Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, no. 91, 16/11/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 342-349; MECW, 6, pp. 367-374.
 25. Engels, "Deutscher Sozialismus in Versen und Prosa", Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, nos. 73, 74, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97 & 98, 12/9/47, 16/9/47, 21/11/47, 25/11/47, 26/11/47, 2/12/47, 5/12/47 & 9/12/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 33-71; MECW, 6, pp. 235-276; (condemnation of the petty bourgeoisie, MEGA I, 6, p. 65; MECW, 6, p. 237; defence of protectionism, MEGA I, 6, p. 64; MECW, 6, p. 236).

as modernising forces connected with the spread of liberal or even democratic ideals, and for this reason defended the Italian liberation struggle against the Austrian army, and the Cracow insurrection of February 1846. He believed the new nationalism sweeping central and southern Europe was, in the main, a by-product of the rise of the bourgeoisie and the spread of its liberal ideology; the Italian and Swiss nationalist movements were good examples, he commented, of this link between the growing wealth of the bourgeoisie and the upsurge of nationalism.²⁶ In short, for Engels liberalism, nationalism, centralisation, technological innovation, and imperialism were all necessary and laudable features of bourgeois modernisation, and he had no hesitation in applauding their appearance wherever he could detect it.

Two other consequences of the spread of liberalism seem to have particularly pleased Marx and Engels: the demise of social Christianity and the increasingly widespread acceptance of the principle of representative government. Atheist and anti-clerical, they delighted in any diminution in the influence of the Christian churches, Protestant or Catholic.

26. Engels, "Die Bewegungen von 1847", loc. cit., MECA 1, 6, pp. 389-398; MECW, 6, pp. 520-529; "Drei neue Konstituten", Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, no. 15, 20/2/48, reprinted in MECA 1, 6, pp. 533-536; MECW, 6, pp. 542-544; Marx & Engels, "Reden von Marx und Engels über Polen in London, 29 Nov. 1847", Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, no. 98, 9/12/47, reprinted in MECA 1, 6, pp. 359-362; MECW, 6, pp. 388-396.

Marx's enmity towards orthodox religion had in no way declined, and in "The Communism of the Rheinischer Beobachter" he vehemently denounced the "social principles of Christianity" as "sneaking and hypocritical" apologetics for oppression, degradation and slavery.²⁷ Since absolute monarchs in Prussia, Austria and elsewhere were constantly invoking these principles to justify their reactionary policies, he reasoned, then the victory of bourgeois liberalism over absolutism would also be a defeat for established religion. This, he suggested, was an excellent reason for labour militants to line up with the bourgeoisie in its political struggle against autocracy, and he charged that self-proclaimed socialists in Germany who sided up with the Crown against the manufacturers -- he had in mind 'true socialists' like Grün, Hess, Heinzen and Kriege -- were betraying the radical cause. Anticipating Nietzsche and Sorel, he concluded that Christianity was fundamentally harmful because it preached "cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submissiveness and humbleness, in short all the qualities of the rabble", whereas the labour movement required above all courage, pride, self-confidence and a greater sense of independence. The bourgeoisie, in undermining traditional Christian values, was thus in his view unwittingly doing the

27. Marx, "Der Kommunismus der Rheinischer Beobachters", Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, no. 73, 12/9/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 269-281; MECW, 6, pp. 220-234; (quotation, MEGA I, 6, p. 278; MECW, 6, p. 231).

democratic movement a valuable service.²⁸

Pleased with bourgeois anti-clericalism, Marx and Engels were equally happy to see liberal propaganda in favour of representative government, although they realised full well that the majority of liberal spokesmen combined this with stringent opposition to universal suffrage. Marx adopted Engels' enthusiastic support for the Chartist movement, and firmly embraced the cause of parliamentary reform in France and England. Engels believed -- and there is no reason to think that Marx in any way disagreed -- that while constitutional monarchy was the bourgeois form of government par excellence, it was an inherently illogical and unstable form of constitution, bound to be replaced sooner or later by a democratic republic. He shared the position advanced in France by the social republicans and in England by the Chartists, that ideals like 'representation of the people' and 'liberty, equality and fraternity', although spawned by the liberal movement during the Enlightenment and Revolution, could and would only be implemented by a democratic republican regime committed to far-reaching social and economic change. In brief, the goals of left-wing liberalism could be achieved only by a socialist society, and moderate reforms would lead inexorably to more radical ones. Engels therefore welcomed any move leftwards on the continuum he saw stretching from

28. Ibid., loc. cit., MEGA I, 6, p. 278; MECW, 6, p. 251.

moderate constitutionalism, limited to the main aim; it was, however, only a first step towards constitution to popular rule, and Engels believed that popular rule would eventually be a reality.

Engels' view of the English attitude in 1847 towards the new class struggle was shared drastically according to the country they were discussing. Their policy of full-class struggle was the same bourgeois-admitted three exceptions - the three countries where they considered the class struggle "impossible" were: France, Belgium, and Britain. Here, as we have seen, they believed that the course of history was moving far further forward than anywhere in Europe, where the class struggle was still in its infancy.

Already in 1847, the great political battle was no longer between monarchy and liberalism, but between constitutional monarchism and direct class republicanism, or, to put it in social terms, no longer between monarchy/aristocracy and bourgeoisie but between bourgeoisie and the working classes. This, actually, is a generalisation, since they considered this state of affairs to exist in a pure form only in Britain where the bourgeois revolution had just been completed, even as they saw the new class struggle in France and Belgium still overshadowed by international conflicts for supremacy among different segments of the bourgeoisie (bourgeoisie). Still, the

29. Engels, "Kritik neuer Konstitutionen", *loc. cit.*, pp. 593-594; Engels, *loc. cit.*, pp. 594-595; and "Die neue Konstitution", *loc. cit.*, pp. 595-596; Engels, *loc. cit.*, pp. 596-597; Engels, *loc. cit.*, pp. 597-598; Engels, *loc. cit.*, pp. 598-599.

point was that in these three industrial nations the landed aristocracy and royal family had been excluded from real power, and opposition to the government meant opposition to the bourgeoisie (or at least part of it).³⁰ Clearly, then, on Marx and Engels' interpretation of contemporary European politics, there were really three kinds of class/ideological struggle going on: (i) bourgeoisie v. traditional ruling elites; (ii) reforming industrialists v. haute bourgeoisie and remnants of the aristocracy; and (iii) working classes v. bourgeoisie. Thus, in certain the whole bourgeoisie in the first instance, the industrialists in the second, and the workers in the third.

So in the key to modern history during the last one hundred years was the culmination of the rise of the old bourgeoisie (18th century) in the dominance of the industrial bourgeoisie, the rise of contemporary politics in Western Europe was the emergence of democratic-republican movements supported by the working classes. Marx and Engels, of course, believed that these movements -- Chartism in England and Republicanism in France -- would grow in strength as their social base, the proletariat, grew in size as a result of industrialisation. They also believed that a new revolutionary era was on the horizon in Western Europe, and that when it came it would usher

30. Engels, "Die neuerwachten von 1847", *loc. cit.*, MECA I, 6, pp. 394-395; MECU, 6, pp. 525-527; "The Prussian Constitution", *loc. cit.*, MECA I, 6, pp. 257-258; MECU, 6, p. 71; Marx, "Die moralisierende Kritik", *loc. cit.*, MECA I, 6, pp. 318-320; MECU, 6, pp. 331-333.

in democratic republics and social reforms in England, France and Belgium. How close this new revolutionary period was they were not sure; they thought, on the one hand, that industrialisation would have to proceed a little further and the working-class mature before a successful challenge to the bourgeoisie could be mounted, but they believed, on the other hand, that a severe economic crisis might precipitate a fierce conflict at almost any time. During 1847 they gradually perceived that such a crisis had already arrived, and Engels, in an article in La Réforme, drew the logical conclusion: strikes in the Lancashire cotton industry, he argued, were likely to spread and become a "general strike" widespread enough to menace the government. He added optimistically that it was quite feasible that the ensuing "uproar" would compel the government to grant "reforms of a most important nature". He also hoped that the Banquet Campaign launched by the extra-parliamentary opposition in France might have a similar revolutionary result, although he was less sanguine about this.³¹

It is important to emphasise, however, that the revolution which Marx and Engels began to expect in Britain and France in 1847 was not a socialist or communist one. What

31. Engels, "La crise commerciale en Angleterre", La Réforme, 26/10/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 328-330; MECW, 6, pp. 307-309; & "The Reform Movement in France", The Northern Star, no. 526, 20/11/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 350-356; MECW, 6, pp. 375-382.

they hoped for, and half expected, was the advent of a political regime based on universal suffrage, i.e., that the revolution would introduce democracy and republican institutions, no more. Communism, though the logical outcome of democracy in the long run, would have to wait for the time being. In the meantime the causes that Marx and Engels thought really mattered -- because they had some chance of success, although this was by no means guaranteed -- were Chartism and the Reform Movement in France. Not surprisingly, given this analysis of Western European political realities, they were at pains to cultivate their contacts among the Chartists, the Belgian democrats, and the French republicans.

Before examining Marx's and Engels' relations with the European democratic and socialist left in 1847, however, it is necessary to point out that their comprehension of the underlying significance of current events was not derived merely from their reading of recent European history. They believed that political change was rooted in economic change, and their expectation of new class struggles and a forthcoming era of democratic revolution sprang in part from their analysis of the new industrial economy. They regarded economic history as important as political history, and if Engels devoted most of his intellectual energy in 1847 to political journalism, Marx spent most of his struggling to apply Ricardian economic theory to the evolution of the European economic system. He had not discarded his plan for a treatise, written from a communist point of view, on political economy, yet he still felt

intellectually unprepared for this task. His criticism of Proudhonian economics, he realised, had been fine in the sense of error and confused thinking, but had scarcely added anything positive to Ricardo. Proudhon had nevertheless given him a seminal idea, which was eventually to become one of the leitmotifs of Capital: the insight that the clue to understanding industrial capitalism was to isolate its internal structural 'contradiction'. Marx never acknowledged this debt to Proudhon, but it was vital. Between finishing The German Ideology and writing the Manifesto he worked out his first version of what he came to regard as one of his most major contributions to economic theory and one of the foundations of 'scientific socialism': the 'law of capitalist economic development'. Conceptually, this 'law' drew upon Proudhon's theory of economic contradictions, and so it was not fortuitous that Marx made this breakthrough in economic theory in the context of his intellectual battle with Proudhon. He sketched the new 'law' in an unpublished manuscript which he wrote in December 1847 while preparing to give a series of lectures on the theory of wages to the German Workers' Society in Brussels.³²

What was this 'law of capitalist development'? It was an attempt to explain the chief features and consequences, as Marx saw them, of rapid economic expansion under the capitalist system. These features, which he had found set out by the

32. Marx, Arbeitslohn, unpublished manuscript, trans. in MECW I, 6, pp. 461-472; MEGA I, 6, pp. 415-427.

of Smith Sismondi, Ricardo and their disciples, and which his personal observations of the contemporary European economy had confirmed, included vast capital accumulation, declining real wages, worsening unemployment, and periodic crises of over-production. Convinced by the recession of 1847 -- which he and Engels perceived as the worst ever -- that these phenomena were not only chronic but increasingly acute symptoms of a fatal disease, Marx was searching for the key which would demonstrate that they were necessary, not accidental, results of industrial capitalism.

We have seen how impressed he was with the immense power of the new industrial technology, and indeed he over-estimated the rapidity with which the industrial revolution was progressing. At any rate, he deduced that the bourgeoisie (narrow usage) was investing tremendous quantities of capital in new mines, factories, machines and transportation networks. Where, he asked himself, had the entrepreneurs acquired all this capital? His answer was that they had greatly increased their profits by exploiting their work force more severely. Furthermore, they were devoting a higher and higher percentage of their income from sales to reinvestment in new plant, and, correspondingly, the amount of money they had available to pay their employees was relatively smaller. Or, to put it in Ricardian terminology, the 'wages fund' was decreasing, and machinery and labour were in "constant competition" for the same quanta of capital, a battle which machinery was winning.

This changing ratio of the percentages of capital invested in new plant and used to pay workers was what Marx later called the changing organic composition of capital.³³

The significance of the phenomenon, he believed, was two-fold: not only did the shrinking wages fund mean that wages would be progressively forced down to a minimum -- the 'iron law of wages' -- but also the increasing capitalization of enterprises meant that more and more goods would be produced by **fewer** and **fewer** workers. Relatively speaking, then, fewer workers would be employed by the new industrial system, and even these would have less money to spend. Marx, following Sismondi and Buret, saw this as the fundamental cause of recurrent over-production crises. He had fused together Sismondi's under-consumption theory of economic depressions with Ricardo's theory of the changing relationship between worker and machine. And once this connection had been made, it appeared that the capitalist system was caught in a dilemma from which it could not escape -- the faster capital accumulation was pushed ahead, the more frequent and severe crises of over-production would become. Under industrial capitalism, Marx concluded, production was doomed to increasingly outstrip effective demand, and this was an intrinsic 'contradiction' or structural flaw in the system. As he phrased the crucial point, "the growth of

33. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 463-467; MECW, 6, pp. 42-43.

this contradiction is inherent in the growth of productive capital".³⁴

Marx's first 'law of capitalist development' that stated that there was an inherent tendency within an economic system based on private property and wage-labour for economic growth to entail rapid accumulation of capital, a changing organic composition of capital, reduction in effective demand, a diminishing wages fund, wages declining to a subsistence minimum, repeated and worsening over-production crises, and chronic unemployment periodically exacerbated by slumps. In short, wealth and prosperity during periods of boom were bound to be bought at an increasingly heavy cost to the working classes. In the atmosphere of gloom and misery created by the recession of 1847 this picture seemed harsh but realistic.

In sketching this 'law' in the Arbeitslohn manuscript, Marx thus synthesised aspects of the work of Comandi, Ricardo and Proudhon, and laid one of the foundation-stones of his later economic theory. It was his first original contribution to political economy. At this time, though, he was less interested in political economy for its own sake -- fascinating though he found the subject -- than for the illumination it could shed on current problems. There were three such economic problems, each with immediate practical social consequences, which especially preoccupied him in 1847. They were the debate between

34. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 467; MECW, 6, p. 432.

free-traders and protectionists, the future of working-class living standards, and the efficacy of trade-unions.

The free trade issue had confronted Marx and Engels every so often since their Rheinische Zeitung days, when Marx had defended the Rhenish commercial community's point of view and Engels had reported on the debate over the Corn Laws.³⁵ It reappeared in September 1847 as the main subject for discussion at an International Congress of Economists held in Brussels, which both men attended. Marx, already starting to work out his new theory of capitalist economic development, decided to expound the communist viewpoint at this conference, although in the event he was denied the rostrum and had to content himself with publishing his speech later as a pamphlet.³⁶ Engels reported the Congress in some detail for The Northern Star and the Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, therein revealing his own sympathies on the matter. They were not identical to Marx's, despite his admiration for Marx's speech and acceptance of his friend's basic conclusion

35. Marx, "Über Schutzzölle" ("The Industrialists of Hanover and Protective Tariffs"), Rheinische Zeitung, no. 326, 22/11/42, reprinted in MEGA 1, 1 (1), pp. 308-309; MECW, 1, p. 286; Engels, "Die Korngesetze" ("The Corn Laws"), Rheinische Zeitung, no. 361, 27/12/42, reprinted in MEGA 1, 2, pp. 363-363; MECW, 2, pp. 380-382.

36. Marx, "Speech of Dr. Marx on Protection, Free Trade and the Working Classes", The Northern Star, no. 520, 9/10/47, reprinted in MEGA 1, 6, pp. 428-431; MECW, 6, pp. 287-290; "Die Schutzzöllner, die Freihandelsmänner und die arbeitende Klasse", Zwei Reden über die Freihandels- und Schutzzollfrage von Karl Marx, Hamm, 1848, reprinted in MEGA 1, 6, pp. 432-434; MECW, 6, pp. 279-281; Discours sur la question du libre échange, Bruxelles, Association démocratique, 1848, reprinted in MEGA 1, 6, pp. 435-447; MECW, 6, pp. 450-465.

that neither free trade nor protective tariffs would materially benefit the workers.³⁷

Marx's approach to the problem was straightforward. He examined the arguments advanced by protectionists and free-traders that their policies would result in greater prosperity and higher working-class living standards, demolished each case to his own satisfaction, and then opted for free trade on the grounds that it would speed up the evolution of the capitalist system with all that this entailed. There were two varieties of protectionism, he argued, moderate tariffs or prohibitive tariffs; the latter version, advocated by G. von Göllich, would guard handicraft production from factory competition and so preserve wage-levels, but only at the expense of industrial stagnation and backwardness; the former, advocated by List, would merely slow economic growth while permitting the protected national bourgeoisie to destroy artisan manufacturing and scoop up large profits. To Marx these alternatives were equally unattractive, and he dismissed protectionism forthwith.

He was more interested in refuting the claims of the Anti-Corn Law League spokesmen that free trade would mean cheaper food and thus higher real wages for the English working-man. This argument, he maintained, was a sophism, because as

37. Engels, "Die ökonomische Kongress", Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, no. 76, 23/9/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 561-564; MECW, 6, pp. 274-278; "The Free Trade Congress at Brussels", The Northern Star, no. 520, 9/10/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 565-570; MECW, 6, pp. 282-287.

soon as the price of bread fell the manufacturers would use it as an excuse to push down wages. The net result would be that the labourer would be slightly worse off than before, because while in the past when a worker skimped on bread he could buy something else instead, as soon as bread was cheap this option would disappear. Moreover, he added, if one looked at the problem in the light of Ricardian economic theory one would necessarily come to the same conclusion: if all commodities were cheaper, labour, also a commodity, would fall in price too, and in fact, since the 'iron law' of wages would come into play, it would fall further than any other commodity. Free trade would thus hasten the decline of working-class living standards to bare subsistence-level. This, Marx continued, was in any case precisely what anyone versed in classical liberal political economy would expect, since Smith's and Ricardo's analyses of the inexorable laws governing free-market economies assumed perfect competition; free trade, in bringing perfect competition nearer, would make the European economy look more and more like Ricardo's paradigm, and that in turn would mean the 'iron law' of wages would operate ever more exactly. Free trade, then, would mean not higher but lower real wages, and would thereby exacerbate the antagonism between capitalist and proletarian. Hence, Marx concluded, while protectionism conserved the status quo, free trade hastened the 'social revolution', and this was the one and only reason he favoured it.³⁸

38. Marx, Discours sur la question du libre échange, MECA I, 6, p. 447; MECW, 6, p. 465.

Engels thought this a significant piece of implacable logic, and he admitted that from the point of view of the English labour movement Marx was correct. But he had much more sympathy for the arguments advanced by French and German protectionists at the Economic Congress, and judged that, intellectually speaking, a pro-tariff French businessman, Duchâteau, had overwhelmingly defeated the English free-traders. Bitingly contemptuous of the platitudes and puffery served up by liberal economists like Bowering, Thompson, and Blanqui, Engels, as a German nationalist, appreciated that protective tariffs were essential for Continental industrialists trying to establish infant industries in the teeth of British competition. And, since it was communist policy to support the German bourgeoisie until it had swept away Prussian absolutism, it was logical that they should back, at least temporarily, the German manufacturers' campaign for tariffs. Engels did not spell out this conclusion explicitly, but his loyalties in the debate were plain to see both in his articles on the Congress and in those on the political situation in Germany. His position made sense, given his stage theory of history: industrial capitalism had to be allowed to develop fully in each European country in order to stimulate the growth of the labour movement and create the socio-economic pre-conditions for a successful democratic revolution.³⁹

39. Engels, "Die Ökonomische Kongress", loc. cit., MEGA I, 6, p. 564; MECW, 6, p. 277; "The Free Trade Congress at Brussels", loc. cit., MEGA I, 6, p. 569; MECW, 6, p. 286.

Engels had relatively little to say about other economic issues during these months. He did make it clear in the Principles that he accepted the Ricardian 'iron law' of wages and the 'absolute impoverishment' thesis, but it was Marx who spent his time investigating this subject in depth. Marx's conclusion, briefly stated, was that both 'absolute impoverishment' and 'relative impoverishment' theses, the alternatives with which he had played since the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, were correct, which really amounted to a vindication of the earlier 'absolute impoverishment' argument. The two main reasons he became convinced of this we have noticed already in connection with his 'law of capitalist development', namely the diminishing wages fund theory, and the Ricardian account of labour as a commodity which would be sold at its cost price (bare subsistence for the employee and his family). He put forward this Ricardian theory of declining real wages on at least four occasions in the months before the February Revolution, in his Discours sur la question du libre échange, in his polemic against Heinzen entitled "Moralising Criticism and Critical Morality", in his Arbeitslohn manuscript, and in the Manifesto.⁴⁰ Marx, of course, was to reassess his views on the movement of real wages in the 1860s, and he then abandoned the 'absolute impoverishment' theory as well as the Ricardian 'iron law'.

40. Marx, Discours, MECGA I, 6, pp. 439-440 & 445; MECU, 6, pp. 457 & 463; "Die moralisierende Kritik", loc. cit., MECGA I, 6, p. 316; MECU, 6, p. 329; Arbeitslohn, MECGA I, 6, p. 460; MECU, 6, p. 426; Manifesto, MECGA I, 6, pp. 939-40; MECU, 6, p. 499.

But there is no question that he embraced both in 1847. A short quotation should suffice to clinch the matter. In the Arbeitslohn manuscript he scribbled:

When wages have once fallen and later rise again, they never rise, however, to their previous level. In the course of development, there is a double fall in wages: Firstly: relative, in proportion to the development of general wealth. Secondly: absolute, since the quantity of commodities which the worker receives in exchange becomes less and less.⁴¹

A few pages later, he explained this 'double fall' by linking it to the changing organic composition of capital, thereby fitting it into his 'law of economic development', and in effect reaffirming his acceptance of the 'wages fund' argument.⁴²

He was absolutely convinced, therefore, that economic growth under capitalism meant declining living standards for the worker. This might imply, he recognised, that it would be in the workers' interest to do all they could to hamper economic growth. He, however, was no advocate of such tactics and held no brief for zero growth. He applauded technological progress and the expansion of large-scale industry both because it was creating the possibility of an affluent society once these productive forces were organised rationally, and because it was daily creating a larger and more desperate proletariat. But he

41. Arbeitslohn, MEGA I, 6, p. 460; MECW, 6, p. 426.

42. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 465; MECW, 6, p. 430.

was also certain that a stagnant or a falling economy was even worse than a growing one. The most favorable climate for the workingman, he wrote, was a period of capital accumulation, because "when capital remains stationary, when manufactures are not merely stationary but declining", during depressions the worker was "the first victim" and "lying in wait to the wall before the capitalist."⁴³ In short, then, if it was true, there was no way out for the wage-laborer, short of a change in political power and using it to abolish private ownership of the means of production. In this way Marx's research and his studies served to reinforce his commitment to communism as the only solution, political and economic, respectively, to the horrors of capitalism.

He presented this pessimistic account of the downward trend of working-class living standards to an audience of German artisans in Brussels. The next day, he wrote, he had to get over to these men and tell them they were mistaken about the long-term movement of real wages. He put it all in a few words and succinctly in the draft of his lecture: "The struggle is entirely on economic lines on which the worker has the advantage."⁴⁴ This apparently entailed that, from a strictly economic point of view, 'combinations' and strikes were legitimate means of struggle and effort, and Marx did not think that the worker should be discouraged

43. Discours, numéro 1, p. 11; ibid., numéro 2, p. 11.

44. Arbeitslehre, Erste, 1, p. 11; ibid., numéro 2, p. 11.

conclusion. In the long run, he acknowledged, this was true; it was an error to think that trade-unions could ever by themselves save their members from exploitation by the bosses, and one had to accept that in the end the workers' associations were certain to lose their war against capital. Yet this did not mean that they would lose every battle. He distinguished between long-term trends in wage-levels and short-term fluctuations, and recognised that strikes could have an impact on the latter, although they were only one of a number of factors involved, and others like seasonal variations in demand for the product might be equally powerful. The single most important cause of these short-term changes, he pointed out, was the business cycle, because the slackening of demand for labour during slumps normally allowed employers to reduce wages, whereas in booms, workers might successfully press for raises. Unions and strikes therefore did, after all, have a limited economic value to the worker, since they enabled him to recoup his periodic losses.⁴⁵

But if trade-unions could and did function effectively as defensive weapons, why could they not be utilised as offensive weapons too? This was the crucial question in the minds of Marx's audience, and one he set out to answer. There was a real difference, he suggested, between a strike designed to

45. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 463-464; MECW, 6, pp. 428-430.

restore the status quo ante and a strike designed to consolidate a real gain in living standards. The effect of the latter, if successful, was to increase an entrepreneur's wages bill when market forces were pressuring him to reduce it in order to cut costs. Caught in this bind, he would fight bitterly to resist the increase, and, if defeated, would resort to replacing expensive workers with more, cheaper, machinery. Thus there were two problems with offensive strikes, Marx concluded: in the first place, "the costs which they cause the workers are mostly greater than the rise in the gains they want to get", and second, "these combinations bring about new machines, a new division of labour, removal from one place of production to another (and) in consequence of all this, a reduction of wages".⁴⁶ From the workers' point of view, then, offensive strikes were a double-edged sword, liable to do more harm than good. In any case, although in especially favourable conditions some might succeed, the majority never could without having an adverse effect on the economy as a whole. He examined the impact that a strong, nation-wide trade-union movement would have on that nation's competitive position in the world market, and concluded that it would be disastrous. High wages, he explained, would mean low profits, and low profits would mean a flight of capital from that country, resulting in a low rate of capital accumulation and slow economic growth: "stagnation and recession of

46. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 470; MECW, 6, p. 435.

industry would be the consequence, and the workers would be ruined together with their masters". From an economic point of view, therefore, Marx felt compelled to endorse the liberal economists' strictures against aggressive 'combinations', and he contended that if the unions served no function other than their ostensible one of "fixing wages" then they would be doomed, in the long run, to fall victim to "the laws of competition".⁴⁷

However, Marx, like Engels, believed that to look at trade-unions in this narrowly economic light was to miss their real value. The essence of a trade association, he argued, was to remove competition between employees and replace it with a co-operative union of workers. It was therefore intrinsically a repudiation of the free-market system, and was an anticipation of an economy based on co-operation and communal ownership. Furthermore, it was also a practical means of uniting the workers and preparing the overthrow of "the entire old society with its class contradictions". In this sense, then, unions were as much political organisations as economic ones, and their chief purpose was to reinforce working-class unity. Marx suspected that many trade-union militants realised, or at least unconsciously sensed this, which was why they paid little heed to the financial sacrifices involved in union organising.

47. Ibid.

"He who wants to beat his adversary", he remarked, " will not discuss with him the costs of the war".⁴⁸ He also noted that the most militant trade-unionists were usually relatively well-paid workers who were prepared to use the margin of income they had above subsistence to support the costs of running political and educational clubs, and deduced that the motives of these workers were not narrowly economic ones but, rather, the desire to fight and overthrow bourgeois society. For Marx, then, trade-unionism was best understood as one facet of the political organisation of the 'proletariat' and its main worth lay in enhancing the workers' class-consciousness. Its value as a defensive weapon against economic exploitation, although undeniable, was secondary to this ideological function.⁴⁹

Marx's last remarks to the Brussels Workingmen's Society raised another issue at the forefront of his listeners' minds. The rapid growth of the factory system, he stressed, meant the demise of independent craftsmen, and the progressive drawing of artisans like themselves into the system of wage-labour. This fate was inescapable, but there were three "positive aspects" to wage-labour: the old condescending patriarchal relationship between master and journeyman was disappearing, so that the worker's free time and money were his to use as he pleased; machines were making physical labour easier and simpler;

48. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, 471; MECW, 6, p. 435.

49. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 470-471; MECW, 6, pp. 435-436.

and of course a unified proletariat was gradually being created that would be "really capable of revolutionising the old society and itself".⁵⁰ One may wonder how much consolation the Brussels artisans found in hearing about this silver lining in the black storm-cloud about to engulf them.

One of Marx's motives in composing The Poverty of Philosophy had been to warn the European working-class movement against putting its trust in what he judged to be fraudulent panaceas. In the Arbeitslohn manuscript and the Manifesto he was as hostile as ever to Proudhonian mutualism, to schemes for workers' savings banks, and to other devices for encouraging self-help within a capitalist framework. He argued simply that none of these would work -- at least on a large scale -- and so were ways of wasting precious time and effort. He stipulated that there were two things which had to be done: the creation of a working-class political party, and the further 'enlightenment' of the proletariat.⁵¹ Both were absolutely essential, and the trade-union movement, as we have seen, was useful primarily in that it helped attain these goals. He was quite sanguine about the chances of creating a political party embracing thousands, even millions, of workers in England, and looked on the Chartist movement as a major step towards this.

50. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 471; MECW, 6, p. 436.

51. Arbeitslohn, MEGA I, 6, pp. 460 & 469; MECW, 6, pp. 426 & 434; Manifest, MEGA I, 6, pp. 535, 537-538 & 556-557; MECW, 6, pp. 493, 497-498, & 518-519.

As for the education of the proletariat, this too would come in time. In the Manifesto he outlined three grounds for expecting the quality of working-class culture to improve in the near future: industrialists, needing the support of articulate and literate workers in their struggle with the landed gentry and with the reactionary segments of the middle-class, were providing educational services like the Mechanics' Institutes and were also drawing proletarians into the political arena; sections of the middle classes were being reduced by modernisation to the status of wage-earners, and these educated newcomers to the 'proletariat' would supply the workers with "fresh elements of enlightenment and progress"; and a small group of erstwhile bourgeois intellectuals like himself were "cutting themselves adrift" from the ruling class and serving as spokesmen and educators of the revolutionary movement.⁵²

As the literacy and knowledge of the masses improved, Marx considered, the labour movement's ability to mount powerful campaigns for political and social reforms would also increase. Like Engels, he had been greatly impressed by the successful campaign for the Ten Hours Bill, and saw this as a model for future agitation. Victories of this kind, he believed, were not only of great practical benefit to the workers, they also served to organise labour militants into a political party. The education and politicisation of the mass of workers would

52. Manifest, MEGA 1, 6, p. 535; MECW, 6, p. 404.

thus proceed hand in hand, and he was sure that an educated, politically-aware working class that was also a numerical majority of the population would have no trouble in taking over the reins of government, once universal suffrage had been achieved. Democracy, then, not savings banks or producers' co-operatives, should be the first priority of the workers' movement in Britain, France, and Belgium.⁵³ Like Engels', Marx's general attitude to the labour movement was in 1847 much the same as Julian Harney's or Louis Blanc's, and so it is not surprising that he looked to these men as potential allies.

But what in fact were Marx's and Engels' attitudes to other European democrats and socialists at this time? What were their considered judgments on the other attempts that had been and were being made in England, France and Germany to create a coherent socialist ideology and to organise the labour movement? We have examined two important developments in their thought in 1847, their sharpened perspectives on recent political history and on the inner 'logic' of the economy, but a third, equally significant, was their working out of a systematic classification of the varieties of European socialism.

The stimulus to do this was the need to provide The Communist League with a programme and a manifesto. Engels began the task by setting out, in the "Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith", the aims and methods of the 'party'; he then developed these ideas in the Principles by sketching his picture

53. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 534 & 536; MECW, 6, pp. 493 & 495.

of the future communist society and the 'new man' who would inhabit it, and by delineating the 'objective' socio-economic forces which he believed would eventually bring it into being.⁵⁴ He divided the 'party's' rivals on the left into three groups: (i) 'reactionary socialists', i.e., advocates of return to a feudal and patriarchal society; (ii) 'bourgeois socialists' -- all social reformists wishing to retain the economic and legal foundations of capitalist society; and (iii) 'democratic socialists': either men like the more moderate Chartist leaders whose hearts were in the right place but whose comprehension of communism was "insufficiently enlightened", or radicals from the petty-bourgeoisie who desired a social republic but who stopped short of communal property. Marx developed some, but not all, of Engels' ideas in the Manifesto, dividing recent socialist and communist literature into three broad groups, with subdivisions. The first two of these groups, but not the third, corresponded to Engels' classification. Marx's three were 'reactionary socialism', 'bourgeois socialism', and 'utopian socialism'; to these, all of which he criticised in some way, he opposed two other ideologies, Engels' 'democratic socialism', and the "modern communism" of The Communist League, both of which he regarded as more realistic, consistent and thoroughgoing than the former three. Which thinkers, then, did he include in the four categories other than his own, and what

54. Engels, "Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith", MECW, 6, p. 96 & 101-102; Grundsttze, MECA 1, 6, pp. 511-519; MECW, 6, pp. 348-354.

was his evaluation of each?

Marx seems to have thought there were several different types of 'reactionary' socialist, although all deserved the epithet because they were defending the values of an older, pre-industrial society with its corporations, guilds and compagnonnages. These were Christian socialism, 'petty-bourgeois' socialism, German 'true socialism', and early revolutionary communism. As an example of a 'feudal/clerical' socialist he probably had in mind Lamennais, while his paradigm of a backward-looking petty-bourgeois socialist was Sismondi, whom he regarded as the most eloquent spokesman for peasants, craftsmen, small manufacturers and businessmen opposed to increasing commercialization and the growth of modern industry.⁵⁵ The reason he classed German 'true socialists' like Grün and Hess as 'reactionaries' can be deduced from Engels' discussion of this group in "The Constitutional Question in Germany"; these intellectuals' opinions, argued Engels, were derived largely from French theorists like Fourier, Cabet, and Proudhon, but they had applied the Frenchmen's ideas to Germany in an abstract and schematic manner which failed to take into account the country's level of economic and political development, and by asserting that the workers' real enemy was the bourgeoisie, not the regime, they had become de facto allies of absolutism and the 'feudal' aristocracy.⁵⁶ The fourth kind of 'reactionary

55. Manifesto, MEGA I, 6, pp. 246-251; MECW, 6, pp. 502-512.

56. Engels, "Der Status quo in Deutschland", MEGA I, 6, pp. 231-232; MECW, 6, pp. 75-76.

socialism', added by Marx as an afterthought, was Babouvian communism, which he had always judged crude and primitive; although a genuine expression of the demands of the workers in the French Revolutionary period, this early revolutionary literature had, he considered, an unprogressive character because it "inculcated universal asceticism and social leveling in its crudest form", and thereby denied the ideal of a well-rounded, truly free personality held by Fourier, Owen and modern communists. It was modelled not on a vision of what might be achieved using modern technology in a rational and humane manner, but on a dubiously accurate picture of moral values and life-styles in the Roman Republic, and as such sought to recreate an ancient society inappropriate to the Europe of the industrial revolution. Hence, notwithstanding its place in the history of communist thought and the heroism of its exponents, Babouvism too had become a hindrance to the modern labour movement.⁵⁷

Marx was not entirely hostile to 'reactionary socialism'. To be sure, he had little sympathy for Lamennais' Christianity, and he and Engels penned numerous bitter onslaughts on Grün, Heinzen and their followers. Nonetheless, it was not so much the doctrines espoused by the 'true socialists' that they disliked -- these, they recognised, were simply a synthesis of various French socialists' ideas -- but the inflexible and a-historical fashion in which they applied them to

57. Manifest, MECA I, 6, p. 553; MECW, 6, p. 514.

current German politics, or used them as an excuse for political inactivity. Engels made the point most clearly in "The Constitutional Question," when he contrasted unfavourably the 'true socialist' tradition from the German workers with the active involvement of the group round Le Réformateur in day-to-day Parisian politics, and with Etienne Cabet's position as "the acknowledged representative of the great mass of the French proletariat."⁵⁸ 'True socialism', then, was 'reactionary' not so much for its ideology, though here too it was insufficiently emancipated from 'bourgeoisism', as for its political strategy and above all its failure to put down roots in the labour movement.

Despite their criticisms of Babouvism, Marx and Engels identified with the Babouvists during the French Revolution and thereafter, viewing the revolutionary communist tradition as a legitimate and important part of the heritage of the modern European socialist movement. Furthermore, they had great respect for that other 'reactionary socialist', Sismondi. Although Sismondi and his disciples' remedies had been hopelessly anachronistic, Marx maintained that they should be given credit for a penetrating and systematic diagnosis of the evils of industrial capitalism, and for exposing the "hypocritical apologetic" of liberal economists for the system.⁵⁹

58. "Der Status quo in Deutschland", MEGA I, 6, p. 232; MECW, 6, p. 76.

59. Manifesto, MEGA I, 6, p. 548; MECW, 6, p. 509.

He appears to have considered the English favorite and, - Ricardian socialist economists he had read in Manchester - essentially Sismondians, too, and he was thinking of men like Bray as well as Buret, Pecqueur and the early Proudhon as he wrote the following succinct summary of the virtues of Sismondian socialism:

This school of Socialism dissected with great acuteness the contradictions in the conditions of modern production...It proved, incontrovertibly, the disastrous effects of machinery and division of labour; the concentration of capital and land in a few hands; overproduction and crises; it pointed out the inevitable ruin of the petty bourgeois and peasant, the misery of the proletariat, the anarchy in production, the crying inequalities in the distribution of wealth, the industrial war of extermination between nations, the dissolution of old moral bonds, of the old family relations, of the old nationalities.⁶⁰

He could hardly have written a more eloquent and comprehensive account of his own intellectual debt to earlier and contemporary French and English socialist economists.

As his best example of his second main category, 'bourgeois socialism', Marx cited Proudhon's Système des contradictions économiques.⁶¹ This, on the face of it, was peculiar, since he had but a few months before published an attack on the very same work as a paradigm of petty-bourgeois ideology. Why had Proudhon been read and cited here?

60. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 54-55; MECW, 3, 2, 5-6.

61. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 503; MECW, 3, 2, 51.

'petty-bourgeois' to 'bourgeois', especially when Marx knew full well that the Frenchman was an artisan (a type-setter) by trade? The fact that Proudhon now had a managerial post with a transport company may have influenced him, but there was more to the matter than this. Marx was, as we have seen, taking over the general category of 'bourgeois socialist' from Engels, and his second example showed that, like Engels, he meant by the term any social reformer who was opposed to political revolution but who sought instead to modify the economic relationship between employer and employee without abolishing the capitalist system. Such theorists, he asserted, usually saw in "administrative reforms" the means of improving the workers' lot, but in fact their schemes, even when sound and far-sighted, would in no way change fundamentally the exploitation of the proletariat and would at best "lessen the cost and simplify the administrative work of the bourgeois state".⁶² This was almost certainly an allusion to the Saint-Simonians, so Marx -- following Engels -- was now grouping Proudhon with Enfantin and his followers as a man who wanted to ameliorate working-class living standards by reorganising (but not overthrowing) the market economy. The classification made sense, given Marx's understanding of mutualism as a planned system of producers' associations and credit banks designed to allow artisans to compete with and buy up, gradually, the capitalist firms in certain trades. Convinced that mutualism,

62. Ibid., MEGA i, 6, p. 553; MECW, 6, pp. 513-514.

if it ever got off the ground in practice, would never become powerful enough to substantially change the existing economy, he regarded Proudhon's economic plans as a piece of timid reformism which would undermine neither bourgeois political rule nor the system of wage-labour and private property. Hence, as a moderate, non-political reformist, Proudhon logically belonged in the 'bourgeois' camp. This implacable judgment demonstrated the overwhelming change that had occurred in Marx's attitude to Proudhon since 1844; from a true ouvrier the Frenchman had become an apologist for the enemy class, all the more dangerous because he still disguised himself in socialist clothing. It was a harsh, but arguably not unfair conclusion, which reflected less the radicalisation of Marx's opinions since 1844 (though, to be sure, this had occurred to a degree) than the change in Proudhon's approach between Qu'est-ce que la propriété? and the Système. Marx decidedly preferred the biting, indignant rhetoric of the young anarchist to the putative practical schemes of the moderate reformer.

In his third main category, 'utopian socialism', Marx distinguished between 'critical-utopian' socialists like Saint-Simon himself and Fourier, and utopian communists like Owen and Cabet. As in the case of Sismondi, he sharply separated what he called the 'critical' side of their systems, i.e., their insightful analyses and denunciations of the immoral premises, malfunctions, and inhuman results of the free-market economy,

from their "fantastic pictures of future society".⁶³ He paid tribute to the search made by Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen for a new social science which would reveal the social laws of bourgeois society and also guide the creation of a new classless one, but he criticised their inadequate sense of history and failure to realise that the proletariat alone could bring socialism into being. Portraying Fourierism and Owenism as products of an "undeveloped state of the class struggle", he repudiated their founders' appeal to wealthy individuals for aid in setting up pilot communities, claiming that such "small experiments" were "necessarily doomed to failure". Marx also criticised these utopians' faith in the efficacy of rational demonstration as a way of removing upper and middle-class hostility to socialism, and their desire to employ only peaceful means; neither of these positions, to his mind, took into account the realities of the class struggle. Still, despite these and other immaturities, Marx recognised the great worth of this 'utopian' literature to the embryonic labour movement because of the "critical element" contained in it; as he put the point, "they attack every principle of existing society...hence they are full of the most valuable materials for the enlightenment of the working class".⁶⁴ Reading between the lines, one can sense here a tinge of regret for the failure of Engels' planned 'Library' of European socialists.

63. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 553-555; MECW, 6, pp. 514-117.

64. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 555; MECW, 6, p. 516.

Marx had much less time for the contemporary followers of Fourier, Owen, and Cabet. Thinking of the sects attached to journals like Phalange and The New Moral World, he attacked these disciples for their mental rigidity and doctrinaire adherence to "the original views of their masters" no matter how the situation of the labour movement had changed since these were first formulated. For such obsequious dogmatism he had nothing but contempt, and unlike Engels he had no sympathy for small-scale experimental communist communities. He poured scorn on Owenite 'Home Colonies', Fourierist phalanstères and on Cabet's plan for a 'Little Icaria' in the New World.⁶⁵ This attack on Cabet in the Manifesto, including Icarianism in the same category as Fourierism and Owenism, is a little surprising, given Marx's and Engels' previous defence of the man as a competent organiser and sensible left-wing politician. Engels was even on good personal terms with Cabet himself at the time and was an occasional visitor to the offices of Le Populaire; moreover, he was in the habit of holding up the Icarian leader to German socialists as an example of a French communist with mass working-class support and an admirable willingness to dirty his hands with the mud of day-to-day politics. Clearly, either Marx and Engels differed in their estimate of the man and his movement, or they had a markedly ambivalent attitude to Icarianism. Probably the latter was the case. They seem to have become partially disenchanted with Icarianism in September (1847) when Cabet issued

65. Ibid.

his call to his supporters to emigrate and create Icaria across the Atlantic; at least, "Allons en Icarie" excited a highly critical reaction from the Société démocratique (a small club of French and Belgian socialists in London, with which the Communist Correspondence Committee was in touch), and from The Communist League in the one and only issue of its journal, Kommunistische Zeitschrift (which was published in September, and which Engels may have helped to write).⁶⁶ It seems almost certain, then, that Marx and Engels viewed Cabet's emigration decision as a major error on his part, and reclassified Icarianism as "reactionary" and "utopian" in consequence, while retaining a certain admiration for Cabet's success as a propagandist and organiser.

Marx's fourth main type of European socialism, the kind he labelled "democratic", was intended to designate primarily the left-wing Chartists in England (i.e., those following O'Connor, Harney and Jones), and the group of 'social-democrats' around the republican Parisian daily, la Réforme, led by Louis Blanc, Ferdinand Flocon, and Alexandre Ledru-Rollin. These were the men he regarded as the best allies of his own 'party' of "modern communists", and to whose support he publicly committed The Communist League in the Manifesto.⁶⁷ Marx and Engels were attracted to the Réforme group and the left-wing

66. Kommunistische Zeitschrift, no. 1 (September 1847), cited by Christopher Johnson, Utopian Communism in France, pp. 246-247. I have been unable to locate a copy of this, which is not included in MEGA, WERKE or MECW.

67. Manifest, MEGA I, 6, pp. 536-537; MECW, 6, pp. 518-519.

Chartists for a number of reasons. For one thing, they admired several of the leaders as dynamic, intelligent, honest and committed personalities; this was particularly true of the Chartists O'Connor, Jones and Harney, whom Engels had known since 1843, but it also seems to have been the case with Louis Blanc (whom Marx knew in Paris during 1843-45) and the editor of La Réforme, Ferdinand Flocon. Nor was there any question that both Chartists and Réformistes were hard-line democrats and republicans who had also campaigned repeatedly and insistently for measures to ameliorate 'the social problem'; these, judged Marx and Engels, were certainly socialists who held no brief for the capitalist system, even if they were not prepared to go as far as publicly adhering to communist principles.

Their approach to politics, too, pleased the two Germans: while renouncing conspiracy and insurrection by small armed groups, they sympathised with the French tradition of large-scale spontaneous uprisings by the populace, and sought to use mass demonstration as a weapon to pressure government into granting reforms. They could hope to do this because they commanded impressive support among the working-class population of the larger towns, and this fact also attracted Marx and Engels, who since 1843 had been growing ever more conscious of the need to back up their "grey" theory with some "material numbers".

68. Marx, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie", Neue Rheinische Zeitung, Paris, 1844, reprinted in MEW, 1, 1 (1), p. 620; MEW, 3, p. 187.

And in any case, their stage-theory of history told them that the next revolution in Western Europe would be a democratic-republican one, so it was logical to support the leading advocates of this transformation, whose time would hopefully be soon at hand. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, La Réforme in France and The Northern Star in England seemed to be the two "great European democratic newspapers" which were leading the struggles of all radicals in their respective countries against the status quo; they were the established spokesmen and leaders of the opposition movements of which Marx and Engels instinctively felt a part. Above all, it was this emotional sense of revolutionary solidarity which bound them to the Chartists and Réformistes.⁶⁹ For a variety of reasons, then, they made co-operation with the Réformistes and Chartists the central tenet of their political strategy in 1847-48. In practice, their links with the Chartists remained slight, apart from Engels' position as foreign correspondent for The Northern Star, but on the eve of the 1848 Revolution they established close contact with Blanc and La Réforme. Engels, in particular, was to become quite involved in the details of republican politics in Paris.

69. Engels, "L'anniversaire de la révolution polonaise de 1830", La Réforme, 5/12/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 363-364; MECW, 6, pp. 391-392.

CHAPTER 14

THE FIVE OF REVOLUTION

During 1847 Marx and Engels tried to work out more precisely what they meant by 'modern', or, as they sometimes called it, 'critical' (as opposed to 'utopian') communism. Despite their sense of comradeship and broad agreement with the social reformers over political strategy, they believed that The Communist League had more radical long-term goals. But what precisely were these? Engels insisted that "the elimination of private property and its replacement by community of property" was a sine qua non for a society in which each individual could be able to "develop and use all his capacities and powers in complete freedom". That was how he defined the chief aim of communism in the "Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith" written in June.¹ In the Principles, he argued that the new social order would have to be based on association (by which he meant a form of co-operative management of industry involving industrial democracy), economic planning (to ensure the efficient running of factories for the community as a whole), and community of property (which

1. "Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith", MECW, 6, p. 96.

he described as "common use of all the instruments of production and the distribution of all products by common agreement"). He clearly regarded private property as the one giant barrier blocking the progress of the human race towards equality and self-fulfilment and he contended that communal ownership combined with economic planning would avoid overproduction crises, dearths, and an unjust distribution of commodities. He evidently expected that material abundance could be achieved relatively rapidly provided that new machines and agricultural techniques were utilised to the full.²

Engels accepted, though, that this great leap forward would require not merely technological progress but also "quite different people" to manage production. He was convinced that communism would create a new kind of human being, and his vision of the new communist man was indeed a primary source of his enthusiasm. The main qualities which he expected the 'new man' to possess were universality of knowledge and a quickness of mind which would allow him to pick up a variety of skills. This, of course, was the old ideal of the Renaissance uomo universale which he had taken over from the Romantic poets and dramatists of whom he had been so fond in his youth, and which he had rediscovered in the French and English 'utopian' socialists. The influence of Fourier was still very strong in the Principles; Engels remained committed to the idea that

2. Grundrisse, MEGA I, 6, pp. 518-519; MECW, 6, p. 306.

could only be made attractive -- and thereby a means to personal self-fulfilment -- if it were made both varied and voluntary. He remained equally optimistic that a combination of education, planning and automation could overcome the division of labour, and that in the society of the future it would be normal for men to switch from one job to another "according to the needs of society or their own inclinations".³ In short, the outstanding achievements of communism, and its principal raison d'être, would be first to give all its members a systematic and comprehensive education designed to develop all their talents, and then to provide them with the opportunities required to cultivate and exercise these abilities. Engels' new social order would thus be a blend of Fourier's Harmony and Pabet's Icaria, using the industrial technology and communal organisation of the latter to achieve the emotional and spiritual liberation of the former.

Marx had certainly shared this visionary ideal during 1844 and 1845, and it is most likely he still did in 1847-48. However, he was more persuaded than Engels of the need for The Communist League to separate itself sharply from older socialist traditions and, as we have seen, he included in the Manifesto a critique of 'utopian socialism' which Engels had omitted in the Principles. It was therefore prudent, he judged, to downplay the more speculative side of "modern communism", and to

3. Ibid., MECA I, 6, p. 518; MECW, 6, p. 353.

concentrate first on explaining the material forces at work which were operating in its favour, and second, on refuting the misconceptions which were widespread concerning communist aims. In the Manifesto he contented himself with the vague promise that, once capitalism was overthrown, class-ridden bourgeois society would be replaced by "an association, in which the free-development of each is the condition for the free-development of all".⁴ This was hardly very explicit, but it did at least indicate that Marx too conceived of the new social order as a kind of co-operative community designed to enhance personal self-fulfilment. Like Engels, he probably still saw communism as the only practical way of implementing his Romantic ideals of creative freedom and self-cultivation.

Still, if the vision of a 'new man' was at the heart of Engels' communism in 1847, he had also devoted some thought to more practical questions concerning life in the future society. The economy, naturally, would be based on public ownership of all land, industry and transportation systems, and an attempt would be made -- exactly how Engels never specified -- to combine highly centralised economic planning (including a computation of total demand in the economy) with a decentralised system of producers' co-operatives run by some kind of managerial democracy. Politics, he thought, (following the Saint-Simonians), would lose its combative character once class divisions had been removed, and would become a matter of

4. Manifest, MECA I, 6, p. 546; MECW, 6, p. 506.

administrative decisions to be made democratically by those involved in managing particular industries and services; this again, was not a problem which he bothered to examine in detail. He still placed a high premium on education, and envisaged the creation of a state-run system providing free and compulsory schooling at both primary and secondary levels; he considered that the training provided should be practical and technical as well as academic, and appears to have contemplated on-the-job instruction in a variety of manual skills as part of the programme. We have already noticed the crucial role he expected this "industrial education" to play in equipping men for their versatile careers in the new industrial order.⁵

Engels was interested, too, in the status of women and the future of the family. Vaguely sympathetic to the cause of female emancipation, he argued that the root of sexual oppression lay in the financial dependence of the wife on the husband. This, he expected, would cease with the abolition of private property, and furthermore, communism, by providing all women with an adequate income and work of their choice, would wipe out that other institution whereby middle- and upper-class males exploited lower-class women, prostitution. His basic idea was that marriage should cease to be an authoritarian relationship bound up with private property, and should become

5. "Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith", MECW, 6, p. 182; Grundskizze, MEWA 1, 6, pp. 516-519; MECW, 6, pp. 352-354.

instead "a purely private relation which concerns only the persons involved and in which society has no call to interfere".⁶ This presumably meant that it would cease to have any tie with the Christian religion, and that divorce would be available on demand. Engels apparently expected that men and women would continue to form sexually-exclusive, long-lasting 'partnerships', but he insisted that moral and emotional decisions of this kind should be left entirely to each individual -- it went without saying that free love would be no more imposed on a member of the new social order than would monogamy. Here again he was echoing the views of Fourier.

He briefly tackled two other questions concerning the future society: religion and nationality. His views on religion were simple: all religions, he claimed, were expressions of earlier stages in the cultural development of the human race; they were now obsolete, and would gradually disappear in the years ahead. The communist society would tolerate them and wait patiently for these superfluous creeds to moulder away. As for nationalities, much the same would be the case. Nation-states at present gave people a sense of community which they otherwise lacked, but once a genuinely communal society had been established this function would be redundant; moreover, the increasing scale of industrial

6. Grundrisse, MEGA I, 6, p. 519; MECW, p. 354.

production and the creation of a world market would diminish parochialism and foster a spirit of internationalism. National differences, and in consequence the sense of nationhood, would therefore gradually decrease. Engels thus perceived nationalism as a phenomenon of the bourgeois era which would eventually abate, although this would undoubtedly be a lengthy process.⁷

Engels' utopia was therefore designed to implement a set of principles: personal self-development, co-operation, communal property, centralised planning, political and industrial democracy, liberation of women, secularism, and internationalism, among others. As such, it was an ideology or doctrine, just as much as Fourierism, Owenism or Icarianism. Part of the time he acknowledged this quite openly, but part of the time he shared the strong aversion which Marx had been developing since 1845 to socialist 'systems' based on rational and/or moral principles. By 'utopian socialism' Marx in the Manifesto meant to designate not only the views of early socialists like Fourier and Cabet, who had actually drawn up blueprints for the future society, but also of all those who had tried to found their intellectual systems on general principles about human nature, self-evident rational truths, and universal moral precepts. Engels' similar hostility to ethical socialism was evident, for example, in "The Communists and Karl

7. "Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith", MECW, 6, p. 103.

Heinzen", where he claimed that communism was a movement, not a doctrine, and praised a pamphlet by his friend Stephan Born for avoiding a "moral attitude" and instead trying to trace "the political struggles of the present" back to their class roots.⁸ Why this aversion to reason and morality as intellectual foundations for modern communism? There seem to have been two main reasons: for one, Marx and Engels now regarded all 'philosophies' (including, of course moral philosophies) as ideologies, and this led them to an ethical relativism which scorned all moral absolutes as meaningless deceptions; for another, they believed that there were much better grounds for believing in the advent of communism. Whereas there had been something inherently subjective and personal about all previous socialist doctrines, they felt, it was now possible to place modern communism on an objective or 'scientific' footing. It was this -- they believed -- which made their version of communism markedly superior to the work of all previous theorists.

The scientific discovery which they saw as corroborating their views was Marx's new 'law of capitalist development'. Even before Marx formulated this in the Arbeitslohn manuscript, he and Engels had been convinced that there was an 'inner logic' to the evolution of the industrial capitalist

8. Engels, Grundskizze, MEGA I, 6, pp. 514-516; MECW, 6, pp. 345-352; Marx, Arbeitslohn, MEGA I, 6, pp. 463-467; MECW, 6, pp. 429-432.

economy. They were also sure that the system's internal 'contradictions' were causing the social and economic problems it had created to grow increasingly severe. In their writings of 1847-48 they did not usually put forward an economic 'breakdown' thesis, but they did claim that inexorable economic processes were at work which would "necessitate" a fundamental reorganisation of the social structure. Economic expansion under capitalism, they maintained firmly, would make replacement of the free-market system unavoidable in the long run. This conviction underlay Engels' explanation in the Principles of why the industrial revolution had made communism certain and Marx's theory in the Manifesto of the "inevitable" victory of the proletariat. Both men thus apparently committed themselves in these works to economic determinism and historical inevitabilism, the twin errors for which they have so often been denounced as 'historicists'. It was not, however, political revolution which they regarded as 'inevitable', but rather far-reaching economic change. And when one examines closely what they wrote, it becomes evident that while they believed that the condition of the free-market economy would become ever more unsound they nevertheless still thought that legislative action by a socialist government would be required to reorganise it on communist lines. They therefore did not suggest that capitalism would automatically evolve into communism, irrespective of political developments. The only thing they considered 'inevitable' (in the sense of

being strictly determined by economic laws), was that economic crises would get worse, real wages lower, and the control of industry fall into fewer and fewer hands.⁹

Marx's account of the evolution of modern industry and growth of the proletariat in the Manifesto is well known, but it was actually more rhetorical and less illuminating than Engels' more succinct version in the Principles because Engels focused more precisely on the forces and mechanisms preparing the way for communism. These he isolated as (i) the growing size and impoverishment of the urban manual work-force -- he reiterated the 'iron law of wages', and again portrayed the industrial cities as flooded with discontented paupers and unemployed; (ii) the evident power of modern technology, if utilised efficiently, to provide sufficient "necessities of life" for the entire population; (iii) the concentration of huge productive forces and vast quantities of capital in the hands of a few firms; and (iv) increasingly severe and prolonged cyclical over-production crises -- these, he asserted, showed that "competition and in general the carrying on of industrial production by individuals have become a fetter upon large-scale industry which it will and must break."¹⁰ He

9. Engels, Grundskizze, MEGA I, 6, pp. 514-516; MECW, 6, pp. 345-352; Marx, Arbeitslohn, MEGA I, 6, pp. 403-407, MECW, 6, pp. 429-432.

10. Grundskizze, MEGA I, 6, p. 510; MECW, 6, p. 347.

argued that these facts combined to prove two things: first, that poverty and inequality were not necessary attributes of the human condition, but were consequences of the present social order; and second, that the means were already available to abolish them completely if men would rationally rearrange the way industrial society was organised. These plain truths, he assumed, would stare in the face any government not committed, because of its bourgeois social composition, to the maintenance of capitalism. Hence, once a government composed of republican democrats elected by working-class votes was in power, it would feel compelled to enact legislation designed to remedy the situation. Its reforms would naturally be implemented only gradually, but as they came into effect they would always lead on to more radical measures. He remarked that once an initial onslaught upon private ownership had been made, a popular government would be forced to "go always further, to concentrate all capital, all industry, all transport, and all exchange more and more in the hands of the State".¹¹ The advent of communism would thus be a fairly slow process, not a sharp violent one, and would depend both on the predictable operation of economic laws and on the coming to power of a socialist government within the framework of a democratic republic.

How, then, would this second prerequisite be fulfilled?

11. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 515; MECW, 6, p. 351.

Did Marx and Engels regard the coming of universal suffrage as the 'inevitable' result of economic forces? The available evidence suggests that they did not, although they were confident enough that, sooner or later, this progressive reform would be forthcoming in England, France and Belgium. They did, we have seen, perceive a strong link between the growth of democratic republicanism and the emergence of the working-classes as a political force to be reckoned with, and their analysis of the rise of this democratic working-class movement was certainly framed in causal terms. Undoubtedly they saw it as a product of the industrial revolution, but nonetheless economic factors were not the only ones they anticipated would create widespread adherence to social-democratic ideology. The development of a sophisticated, politically-oriented class-consciousness was not, in their view, an automatic process; on the contrary, the function of both socialist theory and a democratic political party was to raise the workers' collective mentality above the level of spontaneous discontent and to channel their grievances into constructive action for political and social reforms. Nor would these reforms be achieved unless the labour movement campaigned for them. Once again, it was Engels who discussed these issues in an incisive and concrete manner, and in fact he gave more attention in 1847 to the question of methods than he did to elaborating communist goals. But there was no disagreement of substance between him and Marx on the topic,

although possibly Engels was more sanguine than the latter about the chances of avoiding bloodshed.¹²

The two men were unanimous in condemning conspiratorial tactics and individual acts of violence as not only useless but positively harmful. Engels, who discussed the question of violence/insurrection in some detail in the "Draft Confession", the Principles, and "The Communists and Karl Heinzen", attacked as immature and foolhardy all attempts to stimulate mass uprisings by either propaganda or example.¹³ Revolutionary insurrections by the lower classes, he argued, had a chance of success only if they were massive and spontaneous affairs prompted by social chaos and profound economic dislocation; in these conditions they were fully justified, and any violence associated with them was defensive in nature, a legitimate response to oppression. Real revolutions, he asserted, as opposed to putsch, were never made "deliberately and arbitrarily" but were always "the necessary outcome of circumstances" beyond the control of individuals.¹⁴ If the existing governments of property-owners intransigently refused to expand the franchise or improve working conditions, then

12. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 513-515; MECW, 6, pp. 349-351.

13. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 513; MECW, 6, p. 349; "Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith", MECW, 6, pp. 101-102; "Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinzen", loc. cit., MEGA I, 6, pp. 284-285; MECW, 6, p. 294.

14. Grundsätze, MEGA I, 6, p. 513; MECW, 6, p. 349.

they would no doubt in the end goad the proletariat into rebellion, but this would occur only when the socio-economic conditions were ripe. Engels thus feared premature uprisings, and was not a 'revolutionary', in the sense that he opposed any attempt to 'make' a violent upheaval. He was an advocate of 'revolution' in two senses only: (i) he desired a far-reaching transformation of the structure of society, and (ii) he intended to support a mass uprising by the working-class if this were provoked by government obstinacy over electoral reform and wilful disregard of crying social evils. One might sum up his position by the phrase: "reform preferably, revolution if necessary".

If violent revolution was only a last resort, then obviously Engels envisaged an alternative strategy which he hoped would obviate the need for insurrection. He described this in the "Draft Confession" as "enlightening and uniting the proletariat", by which he meant the creation of a mass movement of literate, articulate and knowledgeable workers willing to attend meetings and marches demanding electoral and social reforms.¹⁵ The advent of universal suffrage would turn this mass of supporters into voters with the power to elect a social-democratic government. But how exactly would this democratic republic come about? Engels was not really sure, but he suspected that the Chartist movement would

15. "Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith", MECW, 6, p.96.

probably be able to pressure the House of Commons into further electoral reform, (there was, after all, the precedent of 1832), whereas in France an insurrection would probably be necessary on the pattern of 1830 to remove the July Monarchy. In both countries he expected that a genuinely popular government, once established, would proceed to enact urgently needed reform legislation. He and Marx had their own ideas about what these reforms should be (which I will discuss later), but they assumed -- along with the Chartists and Réformistes -- that two issues would be given priority: stringent factory laws regulating working hours and conditions, and the creation of a free and universal state education system. Such reforms, Engels thought, would help prepare the way for what he vaguely called "the social revolution" at a later date, but he did not look to the immediate abolition of private property, profit and the wage system. Indeed he stated explicitly that it would be impossible to destroy private ownership "at a stroke" or even to move rapidly to transform all branches of industry to a co-operative form of management. The process of change would be gradual and evolutionary, with industries becoming 'socialised' only as technological progress rendered capitalist operation of them inefficient and anachronistic. Capitalism was in Engels' opinion gradually rendering itself obsolete, but he recognised that it still had a long way to go.¹⁶

16. Grundrisse, MECA I, 6, pp. 514-515; MECW, 6, pp. 350-351;

Political change therefore had priority over economic change in Engels' perspective, and his political strategy was borrowed from the Chartists. To summarise, his scenario for the next few decades ran: (i) universal suffrage, to be obtained (somehow) by popular pressure on the regime; (ii) election of a republican workers' government; (iii) amelioration of the worst abuses of the capitalist system by legislation; and (iv) gradual transformation of private industry into state-owned co-operatives, within the framework of a national economic plan. The question of timing is important; he expected universal suffrage and some initial, moderate social reforms to be achieved in a relatively short time (a few years, or a couple of decades at the most), whereas he looked on the gradual construction of a communist society as a much longer process which would only begin with these initial measures. The creation of the new social order would be a slow business because it could be done only as technological advances gradually made it feasible; a start could no doubt be made at once by 'socialising' the textile industry, mines and railways, but Engels recognised that other branches of production were not yet ripe for incorporation into a communist economy. He thus envisaged a substantial time-period during which there would be a 'mixed' economic system, partly capitalist, partly communist. On the other hand, he expected the workers to win a democratic republic quite quickly, yet

16. (cont'd) "Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinzen", loc. cit., MEGA I, 6, pp. 286-287; MECW, 6, pp. 295-296.

Before even 1848 could happen he believed there would have to be created a first and second 'proletarian party' agitating for reform.¹⁷ Clearly, then, the growth of working-class political consciousness could not be the product of the inevitable contradictions of capitalism, but rather the work of the propaganda of influential social-democratic propagandists, as Proudhon, Proudhon, O'Donnell, Jones, Ledru-Rollin, Hirsch, and others. This explains the crucial importance of the German social-democrats to Engels and Marx. In 1848 they had a different interpretation of their own role. They believed in an imminent communist revolution determined by exclusively economic causes. They were not, however, for would be neither communist nor socialist. They believed in an economic collapse, although they believed it would be sparked by a severe revolution.

When they picture of the political changes they anticipated, it is clear why Engels in the Principles and Marx in the Manifesto each troubled to include a set of proposals for immediate reforms which stopped far short of creating communism. They wanted to give their social-democratic allies practical advice on what measures to bring in once these men had forced governments. The two Germans did not entirely limit themselves on the details of these

17. "Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith", MECW, 6, pp. 96 & 102; Grundriss, MEW, 1, 6, pp. 513-518; MECW, 6, pp. 349-354.

proposals, and in any case they recognised that slightly different measures would be required in France than in England. However, both the reforms suggested in the Principles and those in the Manifesto fall into two fairly distinct categories: measures designed to remedy specific abuses, and measures designed to limit private ownership.

There was only one abuse-remedying reform which Marx advocated and Engels neglected: the abolition of child-labour in factories, and since we know this was a cause about which Engels felt strongly, it either slipped his memory when he drafted the Principles or else he assumed it was so obvious as to be superfluous. There were two which Engels suggested and Marx omitted, deliberately, since he had Engels' text in front of him when he wrote the Manifesto: slum clearance, and full legal rights for bastards.¹⁸ It seems probable that Marx, far from disagreeing with these proposals, merely regarded them as either too minor or too specific to be included in a document which concentrated on more general issues. Other than these points, the two men's proposals in this category were virtually identical. They agreed that the present agricultural system was inefficient, and suggested two ways of increasing food production: cultivation of waste-lands, and the use of modern techniques and fertiliser to improve yields. They were concerned at the growth of drab and dirty industrial

18. Grundsätze, MECA I, 6, pp. 514-515; MECW, 6, pp. 350-351; Manifest, MECA I, 6, p. 545; MECW, 6, p. 505.

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over the question of expropriating capitalist enterprises. They concurred on the expropriation of émigré property, the introduction of progressive direct taxation, the limiting of inheritance rights, and the setting up of large public works projects manned by 'industrial armies' (presumably found among the erstwhile unemployed); they agreed too on the need to nationalise banking and credit institutions, transport networks, and farm-lands; but they disagreed on how to gradually increase the percentage of industry brought under state management, and they disagreed on the issue of compensation.²⁰

Engels envisaged the state gradually taking over more and more farms and factories, but paying compensation to their former owners as it did so. Marx, possibly reckoning that this scheme would be financially unviable, advocated the immediate uncompensated nationalisation of farm-land, making the state the new recipient of rent from tenant farmers. On the other hand, he did not endorse the taking of existing industrial enterprises into public ownership, but rather relied on the ability of large, modern, state-run firms to win an increasing share of the market and to force their private competitors into bankruptcy. His was therefore on balance a moderate strategy, designed to allow public and private enterprise to co-exist for a longer time-period than Engels'. He

20. Ibid.

seems to have felt, in any case, that the precise form and rapidity of measures against private industry were questions best left for future socialist governments to decide in the light of circumstances.²¹

Both Marx's and Engels' lists of reforms had a certain 'rag-bag' quality, and this is hardly surprising, since they were culled eclectically from the pamphlets of a variety of contemporary socialist groups. Engels was the one who assembled them, whereas Marx merely copied most of his list straight from the Principles. To whom, then, was Engels indebted for his ideas? In his first proposal, concerning methods of curtailing private ownership, he drew in part on the Saint-Simonians, in particular when he suggested the abolition of inheritance by collateral lines (Marx, incidentally, was more radical on this point, advocating the total abolition of the right to inheritance, a draconian measure which he was later to repudiate). His second and third proposals (confiscation of émigré property, and compensation to former owners in the form of state-bonds) seem to be taken from the French Jacobin tradition. His fourth point, the setting up of national workshops, was lifted from Louis Blanc's Organisation du travail. The notion of 'industrial armies' in proposal five came from Fourier. Centralisation of credit and banking (number seven) was a standard Saint-Simonian plea. His

21. Ibid.

emphasis on increasing agricultural productivity and on the use of waste land probably derived from Owenism, although it was also a favourite topic for the Chartist leader O'Connor. Proposal nine, the creation of large, specially-built communes in the countryside which would combine agriculture and manufacturing was also strongly reminiscent of Owen, but also of Fourier's phalanstères. Other proposals, like the nationalisation of transportation, or the creation of a comprehensive and free education system, were the common property of many European reformers. But what is more important than the details of Engels' debts is the general point that virtually nothing he proposed was original. Here, as elsewhere, he was simply bringing together ideas he had found in the writings of quite a variety of French and English socialists.²²

By the end of 1847, therefore, Marx and Engels had worked out an overall perspective on recent European history, an analysis of internal 'contradictions' and the future development of industrial capitalism, a systematic critique of contemporary socialism, a clearer conception of "modern communism", and a political strategy. They were anxious to cultivate what few links they had with the labour movement in Western Europe, and had established themselves as spokesmen for the 'forward-looking' artisans of the Communist League. Still hoping to make their livings as political journalists,

22. Ibid. Naturally, since the Manifesto was heavily indebted to the Grundskizze, this conclusion applies to Marx's reform proposals too.

they had defined their roles as defenders and 'enlighteners' of the lesser workers, and saw themselves as members of a small band of socialist propagandists who were building up a mass democratic 'political party'. Their sense of commitment to their democratic socialist movement and the logic of their strategy as well as their very politics both pointed to cooperation with the native socialist party in the cities in which they were active. In London, Marx in Brussels became a member, and later a secretary, of the Association démocratique, which was the official meeting place of the German workers' political party. It was the only outlet as a political journal for the Brüsseler Zeitung, aimed at the native socialist party in the city.

Marx, however, lived in a less parochial atmosphere, and found a wider range of political activity open to him. He had access to the Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, and the opportunity of contributing to the native socialist newspapers and journals. As a result, he had the chance not only to help Everbeck and his fellow-artisans in the city but also to make contact with the native socialists, middle-class radicals like the Réform group and the Fourierists

73. "The annual meeting of Brussels to the Franco-German Democratic Association in London", The Northern Star, vol. 541, 4/4/46; MECW, 6, pp. 640-642; "Bericht der deutschen Brüsseler Zeitung über Marxens Rede auf der 51. Versammlung der Brüsseler Deutschen Arbeiter-Gesellschaft am 31. December 1847", NEGA I, 6, pp. 650-651; MECW, 6, p. 639.

running Démocratie pacifique, or artisans like the supporters of Buchez grouped around L'Atelier, the Icarians around Le Populaire, and the revolutionary communists influenced by Dézamy and Lehaufière. Although he failed to follow up all these possibilities, Engels did become quite heavily involved with left-wing French politics, and made some personal contacts with leading French democrats and socialists. Apart from one brief contribution to L'Atelier he sent articles to only one Paris newspaper, La Réforme, but through these he did exercise an influence, albeit a very minor one, on the French left. And in the reports he dispatched to The Northern Star and the Deutsche-brüsseler Zeitung he gave an account of Parisian political life which in the main reflected the opinions of the Réformistes.²⁴ Let us therefore take a closer look at Engels' activities and views as a Parisian journalist.

La Réforme lacked an English correspondent, and in October 1847 Engels made himself a surrogate. He regularly scanned The Times and the Manchester Guardian for news of the labour movement, and made full use of the copies of The Northern Star which he received, somewhat irregularly, by mail from London. From these sources, and from information collected on his own occasional trips to London, he wrote a series of reports

24. Engels had nine articles (mainly on French politics) published in The Northern Star between September 1846 and January 1848. A few of his numerous Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung articles during the same period were also on French politics.

on the developments in the Chartist movement and other topics of current British politics. These articles ceased only when he was expelled from France by the Guizot government at the end of January 1848, by which time he had had nine printed in La Réforme and one in L'Atelier.²⁵ They were naturally very sympathetic to Chartism, and, taken together, painted a picture of a growing and vigorous democratic movement admirably led by the intrepid trio, Jones, Harney, and O'Connor. Their basic message to the readers of La Réforme was that there existed in England a parallel to the Banquet Campaign of the French opposition, but that the English movement was thoroughly working-class in composition and anti-bourgeois in sentiment. Engels portrayed the Chartist leaders as socialists in outlook, and also firm supporters of the French radical republican tradition -- in short, as the English equivalents of Louis Blanc and Ferdinand Flocon. He frequently gave extended quotations from their speeches, and sometimes went out of his way to defend their tactics and programmes, such as the campaign for a five million signature petition to the House of Commons and O'Connor's Chartist Land Company schemes.²⁶ His own

25. Engels, "Les maitres et les ouvriers en Angleterre", L'Atelier, no. 2 (November 1847), pp. 24-25, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 331-332; MECW, 6, pp. 310-311.

26. Engels, "Le programme agraire des chartistes", La Réforme, 1/11/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 333-335; MECW, 6, pp. 358-360; "Agitation chartiste", La Réforme, 30/12/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 571-573; MECW, 6, pp. 412-414; "Mouvement chartiste: La petition nationale", La Réforme, 19/1/48, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 579-582; MECW, 6, pp. 473-475.

admiration for Feargus O'Connor and Ernest Jones came through very clearly, and he presented George Julian Harney as a man with a good knowledge of the French Revolution and a special affection for the French Left. He emphasised the massive support accorded these leaders by English workingmen, suggested this was increasing daily as a result of the 1847 economic crisis, and optimistically predicted that the Chartist movement was on the eve of a major breakthrough. The combination of mass demonstrations and worsening unemployment, he thought, would surely compel the government to make some concessions to the Chartists' demands in order to ensure the maintenance of law and order.²⁷ All in all, the impression given of Chartism by Engels' reports was of an energetic, united and successful movement likely in the very near future to force another Great Reform Bill on the English parliament, and capable too of adding considerable weight to campaigns for social reform legislation like the victorious one for the Ten Hours Bill. His readers could be pardoned for believing -- as Engels himself half-believed -- that the triumph of social-democracy was imminent across the channel.

27. Engels, "Le banquet des chartistes à propos des élections de 1847", *La Réforme*, 5/11/47, reprinted in *MEW* I, 3, pp. 336-338; *MECW*, I, pp. 301-303; "Le mouvement chartiste", *La Réforme*, 22/11/47, reprinted in *MEW* I, 3, pp. 337-338; *MECW*, 6, pp. 343-344; "La crise commerciale en Angleterre -- Mouvement chartiste -- Irlande", *La Réforme*, 1/12/47, reprinted in *MEW* I, 3, pp. 339-350; *MECW*, 6, pp. 347-348.

If Engels' interpretation of English politics derived more from his own desires than from a close knowledge of the real situation in the country, his account of French politics at least presented a fairly faithful view of how Le Réformateur saw things. He was confident that the republican opposition would eventually overcome the July Monarchy, but his estimation of the survival power of the Guizot government flew in the face of the vicissitudes of daily events. His basic framework of analysis, however, did not change. As we saw earlier, he believed that France had begun, but far from completed, its bourgeois revolution in 1830, and that the July Revolution had placed power in the hands of an haute bourgeoisie of financiers and owners of great landed estates. In consequence, the French bourgeoisie (wide usage) was rent by internal conflict, at least considered the primary power struggle to be between this elite, supported by those members of the middle classes who stood to lose from further industrial expansion, and the rest of the bourgeoisie led by the industrialists. But there also existed a secondary conflict -- an embryonic class-struggle -- between the proletariat (including, on Engels' usage, the artisans), and the bourgeoisie as a whole. At the moment this took, in practice, the form of a clash between the regime and the democratic movement, and since both the industrial bourgeoisie and the workers were fighting the governing élite a temporary alliance had emerged between the two oppositions. But this, he judged, was a highly fragile

coalition, because the middle-class opposition neither trusted its socialist allies nor really believed in universal suffrage.²⁸

This schematic perspective underlay all Engels' accounts of Parisian politics from the autumn of 1846 to March 1848. He first attempted to explain the realities underlying the surface events in an article entitled "Government and Opposition in France" in The Northern Star.²⁹ Here he argued that the real rulers of France were not Guizot and his minister of the Interior, Duchâtel, but Rothschild, Fould, and the other large Paris bankers. "The fate of France is decided", he remarked, "not in the Cabinet of the Tuileries, not in the Palace of Peers, not even in the Palace of Deputies, but on the Paris Exchange". The financial élite, he charged, controlled the government, and the government controlled elections through patronage and bribery, the result being that parliamentary proceedings were reduced to a mechanical farce orchestrated by these "money lords". Engels maintained that there existed a "general opposition" to the government among the majority of the urban middle-classes excluded from the narrow franchise, and that in Paris most even of the tiny,

28. Engels, "The Decline and Approaching Fall of Guizot -- Position of the French Bourgeoisie", The Northern Star, no. 506, 3/7/47, reprinted in MECA I, 6, pp. 262-268; MECW, 6, pp. 213-219.

29. "Government and Opposition in France", The Northern Star, no. 460, 5/9/46, reprinted in MECA I, 6, pp. 29-30; MECW, 6, pp. 61-63.

wealthy electorate supported the moderate liberal leaders Adolphe Thiers and Odilon Barrot. He believed the urban petty-bourgeoisie, too, to be partisans of electoral reform and supporters of more radical liberals like Louis Garnier-Pagès and Alphonse de Lamartine, both of whom were republicans but not, in Engels' opinion, democrats. A section of the petty-bourgeoisie, he added, and most of the artisans supported "the democratic party", itself divided into three main wings: a moderate 'party' under the banner of Le National, the social-democrats around La Réforme, and the Icarians and other communists. In the fall of 1846 he was therefore very conscious of the divisions within the opposition forces, and apparently considered the government well entrenched despite the "enormous hatred" he detected in the Parisian populace against it and its Jewish backers.³⁰

By July 1847 Engels was entitling one of his Northern Star articles "The Decline and Approaching Fall of Guizot". He was now much more optimistic that electoral reform could not be long postponed. Revelations of venality and corruption in government circles were threatening to bring down the Guizot-Duchâtel ministry within a matter of weeks, he exulted, and there was no sign of a substitute for Guizot acceptable to both the haute bourgeoisie and middle-class public opinion. Until very recently, he argued, the "fund-holders and bankers" had had

30. Ibid.

things nicely under control; they were much stronger than the manufacturers and merchants whose businesses were harried by foreign competition and frequently indebted to the financiers. According to Engels, these industrialists, represented in the Chamber by Thiers' group, had been declining in political influence since 1830 and losing seats in by-elections; hence they posed no major threat to the élite provided the existing narrow suffrage was maintained. But in Engels' judgement the recurrent scandals and the pressure of public opinion made it increasingly difficult for the status quo to be maintained indefinitely. The ruling financial elite was in a quandary, he claimed, because the current franchise, though well-suited to the election of conservatives, inevitably placed in positions of power men intent on using them to feather their own nests. Hence French politics slipped from scandal to scandal, a "vicious circle" which was alienating even staunch adherents of the regime, and from which there was no escape but electoral reform. The problem, from the point of view of the haute bourgeoisie, was that even a moderate measure extending the franchise would give greater influence to the manufacturers and merchants, and any substantial extension would give the vote to the republican petty-bourgeoisie. As Engels put it, reform, even moderate reform, would mean the admission of the "smaller bourgeoisie" to the suffrage, and that in itself would be "the beginning of the end" for the ruling élite.

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cease their criticism in return for a minimal extension of the franchise. This would presumably mean, in sociological terms, that the financial elite would have to share its power a little more with the manufacturers, merchants and middle-class professionals, but Engels clearly did not think this would make a great deal of difference in practice. It now seemed to him that the power struggle within the French bourgeoisie was not as acute as he had previously reckoned, and that the really important division in French politics was between the republican democrats and everyone to their right.³³ Yet he was not sure precisely where this line should be drawn. Was the French bourgeoisie still split, he pondered, or had it now closed ranks in the face of the workers' demands for a republic and universal suffrage?

Searching for an answer to this question, he examined the conduct and speeches of leading spokesmen for the moderate republicans, men like Garnier-Pagès, Lamartine, and the editors of Le National. In the fall of 1847 Lamartine, seeking to rally the forces of the opposition behind his own leadership, issued a manifesto, the Déclaration de principes. Engels pounced on this as indicative of the attitudes of the liberal republicans, and gave it hostile scrutiny in the pages of The Northern Star.³⁴ Lamartine's proposals for political reform,

33. Ibid.

34. "The Manifesto of M. de Lamartine", The Northern Star, no. 525, 13/11/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 339-341; MECW, 6, pp. 364-366.

he noted, were all based on the Constitution of 1791, which meant they reflected the demands of the middle classes in the early stages of the French Revolution and aimed at giving power to the "inferior bourgeoisie" under the semblance of introducing democracy. As for Lamartine's suggested social reforms, these were, in the main, either feeble pieces of charity or empty promises which could not be fulfilled. Engels poured scorn on this Romantic liberal's vague promises to extinguish mendicancy, abolish public distress and create a "ministry of the people's life", and he charged that most of Lamartine's other proposals were calculated to "soften down the revolutionary energies of the proletarians" and benefit them "in such a degree only as will assure some sort of public tranquillity". He accepted that the Frenchman's intentions were good and that he was acting in good faith, but he judged nevertheless that his programme, if implemented, would prove useless except for the valuable provision of free education for all. What Lamartine had done, he added, was to brand himself as the charlatanish representative of the urban petty-bourgeoisie, and whose ideas had not progressed beyond "English middle-class expediency". The real significance of the Déclaration was that it indicated that Lamartine and the petty-bourgeoisie were dying away from the vital principles of "universal suffrage, direct election (and) paid representation", and that their 'solution' to the social problem involved fiddling around with the poor rate rather than creating what was needed, a "new system of social economy". In short,

even if they proved of some help in the operation of removing Guizot and Rothschild from power, they would probably be an obstacle to the real task of a republican regime, that of reconstructing "all social institutions" in accord with the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity.³⁵

Lamartine, then, had not gone over to the government, but he was likely to be an ally of dubious value to the social-democrats. How about Garnier-Pagès? His speeches, flights of nationalist rhetoric designed to paper over the tensions within the fragile coalition of opposition groups, irritated Engels immensely. Garnier-Pagès, he had to admit, certainly still seemed committed to the alliance of manufacturers, tradesmen and workers against the regime, so much so that he denied any conflicts of interest between these social groups. But it was absurd, Engels expostulated, to try to patch up the unity of the left by denying the economic war between capital and labour. To deny the class struggle, he added, was to deny the exploitation of the proletariat, in other words, to defend the present capitalist economy with all the injustice and misery it created.³⁶ If Garnier-Pagès was politically a republican, then, he was socially and economically a paradigm bourgeois, and it was obvious that the democratic movement would receive no help from this quarter when it tried

35. Ibid.

36. "The 'Satisfied' Majority", loc. cit., MEGA 1, 6, p. 379; MECW, 6, p. 440.

to obtain the social reforms needed to complement universal suffrage. Engels' conclusion was therefore that while an alliance was still possible with "bourgeois radicals" of Garnier-Pagès' stripe, it would be only a very temporary affair restricted to the winning of electoral reform, and that an irreconcilable conflict between these bourgeois liberals and the social-democrats was bound to break out immediately the Republic had been installed.³⁷ On this point he proved, in the event, to be quite correct.

Apart from Thiers and Barrot, moderate liberals whom Engels classed as untrustworthy and anti-democratic, there was one other opposition group to the right of La Réforme whose value as an ally seemed to require reassessment. He had originally reckoned Le National as a democratic-republican newspaper, more cautious than La Réforme, to be sure, and more wary of far-reaching social change, but nonetheless committed to universal suffrage. At the end of November 1847 he began to have his doubts. The reason was the polemic which had broken out between Le National and La Réforme over tactics during the Banquet Campaign which the various opposition groups had begun to stage against the Guizot government. In practice there had turned out to be not one Campaign but two rivals: a moderate one, aimed at an undefined measure of electoral reform and supported by a respectable middle-class clientele, organised

37. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, p. 382; MECW, 6, pp. 443-444.

by Barrot, Garnier-Pagès and other liberal leaders; and an overtly republican and democratic one, aimed at toppling the July Monarchy and supported by a petty-bourgeois and artisan clientele, organised by La Réforme. Le National had deplored the split in the opposition, and, when forced to choose between the rival banquets, had reluctantly opted for the moderates. Engels, like the leaders of the Réformistes, regarded this as treachery, and vigorously defended La Réforme's case in several articles on the subject in The Northern Star.³⁸ He remarked sadly that the group around Le National, by acquiescing in Barrot's scheme to restrict attendance at the banquets to the wealthy and in his refusal to openly repudiate the monarchy, had forsaken the workers for the bourgeoisie. Still, he believed Le National had only temporarily abandoned its democratic ideals, and, regretting its 'defection', hoped it could be persuaded of the error of its ways and that a reconciliation could be effected with La Réforme. Conflicts with the bourgeois liberals with whom a marriage of convenience had been contracted were one thing; a split within the democratic-republican "camp" was another, and a serious problem. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the dispute, he believed, it was

38. "Split in the Camp" -- The Réforme and the National -- March of Democracy", The Northern Star, no. 528, 4/12/47, MECW, 6, pp. 385-387 (omitted from MEGA); "The Reform Movement in France -- Banquet of Dijon", The Northern Star, no. 530, 18/12/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 365-369; MECW, 6, pp. 397-401; "The 'Satisfied' Majority", loc. cit., MEGA I, 6, p. 382; MECW, 6, pp. 443-444.

imperative to throw the latter out and quickly patch up a reconciliation.³⁹

Alexandre Ledru-Rollin, one of the less radical members of the Reformists, was of this opinion, too; this, and his oratorical powers at the banquet, convinced Engels that he combined the remarkable qualities of prudence and passion, and was doing an excellent job as spokesman for the "ultra-democratic" cause. In spite of clinical faculties, so acute when analyzing the character of moderate liberals, seem to have disappeared in the heat of Ledru-Rollin's rhetoric. With evident regard to his edition for The Northern Star the entire text of "Reform Banquet at Lille", given at a reform banquet in the northern textile town of Lille, in which Ledru-Rollin shamelessly defied his working-class audience.⁴⁰ But whatever lapses in style and logic he committed, he certainly knew how to reach across the class barrier to a proletarian crowd, and Engels had nothing but praise for this oratorical performance. Men like Ledru, he considered, were invaluable in the formidable task of raising political consciousness among the uneducated masses. He had high praise, too, for the verbal fireworks of Louis Blanc and Flourens at the Reformiste banquets, and also translated choice passages of these for the readers

39. Ibid.

40. "Reform Banquet at Lille -- Speech of H. Ledru-Rollin", The Northern Star, no. 430, 18/12/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 9, pp. 395-40; Ibid. 9, pp. 393-396.

of The Northern Star.⁴¹ A banquet at Dijon was one of the high points of the Reformiste campaign, and Engels apparently attended it, warming to the speeches of Ledru, Blanc, Flocon, and Etienne Arago. Louis Blanc's speech caught his imagination in particular, despite its chauvinism, which he gingerly criticised: Blanc, he wrote, "delivered a splendid speech, containing many just and striking observations on the past development of France; on the conclusions to draw from it in regard to the future; on the particular character impressed indelibly upon the French Democratic Movement by the revolution. He was repeatedly and deservedly interrupted by applause. It was a speech quite worthy of the first historical writer France now possesses."⁴² This comment illustrates nicely Engels' admiration for Blanc and the enthusiasm he felt for the activities of the réforme group. By December 1847, when he wrote it, Engels had become a de facto member of the group himself. He had chosen to support Blanc's democratic reformism rather than Cabet's pacific communism or D  zamy's more violent strategy.

How had this come about? Engels had been unable to collaborate in any substantial way with the French left during the period August 1846 to July 1847, which he had spent agitating among the German artisan community in Paris. This had disappointed him, and he had resolved to try again. But when he

41. "The Reform Movement in France -- Banquet of Dijon", The Northern Star, no. 530, 18/12/47, MEGA 1, 6, pp. 368-369; MECU, 6, pp. 397-401.

returned to Paris in October, after lengthy visits to London and Brussels, his main purposes had still been to help Everbeck create a viable branch of The Communist League and to publicise Marx's The Poverty of Philosophy. At this time, then, he had by no means been sure that he would throw in his lot with the Réformistes rather than the Icarians. He was determined to have nothing to do with socialist groups sympathetic to the Babouvist tradition of conspiracy and armed insurrection by 'professional' revolutionaries, which was no doubt why he steered clear of both the "revolutionary communists" and the Blanquists. He of course agreed with Marx's estimate of Proudhon, disliked the cautious moderation and Christianity of Buchez's disciples at L'Atelier, and thought the Fourierists were doctrinaire bourgeois who had watered down their master's insights, so he did not look for close contacts in these quarters. But he did admire both Louis Blanc and Etienne Cabet as "Party men" who were, each in his own way, aiming at "practical, tangible results". In fact, he regarded the latter, not the former, as the "acknowledged representative of the great mass of the French proletariat", and in the summer of 1847 was still more inclined to offer his services to the Icarian leader.⁴³ When Engels had contacted them before, both men had refused, pleading overwork, to become links in the Communist Correspondence Committee's network, but in other respects had

43. "Der Status quo in Deutschland", MEGA I, 6, p. 232; KECW, 6, p. 76.

been genial enough. So he thought it might be worthwhile looking them both up once more. But which group should he try to collaborate with? The thing that tipped the balance in Engels' mind was Cabet's new "Allons en Icarie" policy, of which he heartily disapproved. If Cabet was relapsing into utopianism, he reasoned, the practical and intelligent Blanc might be a better bet notwithstanding his antipathy to communism. So he decided to try Blanc first and see if he were now more willing to enter into relations with German, British and Belgian democratic socialists than he had been with the Correspondence Committee the previous year.

Engels looked for Blanc at the editorial offices of La Réforme, failed to find him there, but encountered Ferdinand Flocon instead. The two men, similar in temperament and political views, hit it off at once. Flashing his credentials as foreign correspondent for The Northern Star, Engels inquired whether La Réforme might have any use for contributions about English or German politics. He found, to his joy, that Flocon had no staff-member able to read English, and, moreover, was rather ashamed of his paper's poor coverage of the Chartist movement.⁴⁴ As we have seen, Engels immediately took on the job of furnishing a weekly article about the English left, and his first report on Chartism appeared a few days later, on the 26 October.⁴⁵ This lucky break afforded him the opportunity to

44. Engels to Marx, 25-26/10/47, CME, 1, pp. 495-498.

45. "La crise commerciale en Angleterre -- Mouvement chartiste -- Irlande", La Réforme, 26/10/47, MEGA I, 6, pp. 328-330; MECW, 6, pp. 307-309.

get to know Flocon and Blanc personally.

He renewed his acquaintance with Blanc on the 25th, after, as he related in a letter to Marx, a fearful struggle with the little man's concierge.⁴⁶ Blanc, a rather moody individual, was in a good temper, and seemed most friendly, so the two men had a lengthy conversation. Engels had come prepared. He showed Blanc letters of accreditation from the Chartist leadership, from the Brussels Association démocratique, from the group of French democrats in London, and from several Rhenish democratic societies. The Frenchman was impressed, and agreed that the Réformistes should establish closer links with London and Brussels. It transpired, too, that he remembered Marx well from their conversations in 1843-44, thought highly of his intellect and knowledge, had regretted the cooling of their friendship after differences of opinion, and hoped that these past disagreements might now be buried. He promised to read Marx's book against Proudhon and to review it in La Réforme. In return for Engels' information about the democratic movement in England, Switzerland, Belgium and the Rhineland, Blanc gave the young German his own impressions of the "mouvement souterrain" among the Parisian workers, claiming that these were "plus révolutionnaires que jamais" but had now learned to bide their time rather than fritter away their strength in aimless riots. Remarking that

46. Engels to Marx, 25-26/10/47, CME, I, pp. 423-424.

a workers' press had just produced another 6,000 copy edition of his Organisation du travail, he argued that most Parisian artisans were socialists as well as republican democrats, and that the revolution, when it came, would be more radical than any preceding one. "C'est pure bêtise", he exclaimed, "que de se contenter de vociférer continuellement contre les rois". Engels was delighted to find Blanc so revolutionary, and also to find that he held Marx in high regard; "tu le vois", he reported to Marx, "cet homme est all right, il a les meilleures dispositions du monde".⁴⁷

After these successful interviews with Flocon and Blanc, Engels decided to call also at the offices of L'Atelier and Le Populaire. Not only was he curious to see how these groups would receive him, he also wanted to check whether they had received review-copies of The Poverty of Philosophy and to encourage them to insert favourable notices. He discovered that no copies had arrived, due to the remissness of Marx's Parisian publisher, and he promised to return personally bearing the gifts. He did not succeed in meeting Cabet this time, but received a warm welcome at L'Atelier. Its editors were eager to hear his anecdotes about Chartism and the English labour movement, accepted an article from him about Lancashire textile workers, and even invited him to collaborate on a regular basis with them.⁴⁸ Engels, however, who considered L'Atelier

47. Ibid., loc. cit., p. 494.

48. Ibid., p. 497.

timid, dull and small in circulation, was reluctant to do so unless his arrangement with La Réforme broke down. As far as he was concerned, L'Atelier was a second-best option which he would keep in reserve. In any case, he had his sights on a more prestigious journal, the Revue indépendante, to which he hoped Pierre L. roux might write him an introduction.⁴⁹ The February Revolution intervened before Engels' more grandiose plans matured, however, and as far as is known he wrote no further articles for Revision papers other than La Réforme before the Guizot Government's political police caught up with him.

When he had to find that Flocon inserted his Charism articles in La Réforme without changing a word, but he was unable to persuade the officialistic editorial board, which favoured tariffs against English manufactured goods, to print Marx's Brussels speech on free trade. Blanc apparently had no objections to the article, but Flocon vetoed it as "un peu confus", and then, when Engels pressed the matter, only accepted it on condition that he should have a free hand to amend. Engels, judging that this arrangement would not prove suitable to Marx, decided to let the whole matter drop rather than risk a contre-temps. Flocon, he explained to Marx, was "un homme de bonne volonté", but limited in his intellectual horizons and woefully ignorant of economics, which helped explain the inadequacy of La Réforme's articles on economic affairs. His impression was

49. Ibid., p. 495.

that Blanc rather despised Flocon's intellectual pretensions, and his current judgment was that Blanc was certainly the better informed and more reasonable of the two.⁵⁰

In the wake of this disappointment, Engels lost much of his initial enthusiasm for the editor of La Réforme; his disenchantment was however only temporary, and by the end of November, in the heat of the Banquet Campaign, he had forgotten most of his reservations. La Réforme might not be perfect, he thought, but, as he explained to the readers of The Northern Star, it was the one Parisian daily which not only supported universal suffrage but which understood by the slogan "république" social reforms as well as political ones.⁵¹ As such, he believed, it was the only wide-circulation paper which was in touch with the mentality of the Parisian workforce. Like Blanc, he was convinced that the working people of the city were daily becoming more revolutionary, and it seemed to be a fact that Blanc's Organisation du travail was selling like hot cakes among the artisans. He painted the following picture of the Parisian lower classes in The Northern Star:

The necessity of a revolution, and a revolution more thorough-going, more radical by far than the first one, is deeper than ever felt by the working people here. But they know from the experience of 1830, that mere fighting will not do; that the enemy once beaten, they must establish measures that will guarantee the stability of their conquest; that will destroy not only the political

50. Engels to Marx, 14-15/11/47, CME, 1, pp. 502-504.

51. "The Reform Movement in France", The Northern Star, no. 526, 20/11/47, reprinted in MECA 1, 6, pp. 354-355; MECW, 6, p.380.

but the social power of capital, that will guarantee their social welfare, along with their political strength. And, therefore, they very quietly await their opportunity, but, in the meantime, earnestly apply themselves to the study of those questions of social economy, the solution to which will show what measures alone can establish, upon a firm basis, the welfare of all....They read works upon these questions; they meet in small numbers of from ten to twenty, and discuss the different plans propounded therein. They talk not much of revolution, this being a thing admitting no doubt, a subject upon which they one and all agree.⁵²

This picture seems to be a composite, created from Engels' wishes, his personal observations, and Louis Blanc's partisan information. Accurate or no, it was what Engels believed to be the case, and he was now sure in his own mind that whereas Cabet's Icarian communism had received the adhesion of most politically conscious provincial workers, the Parisian artisanate had predominantly opted for Blanc's programme of universal suffrage followed by extensive social reform. This programme, of course, was also his own, and he became more certain that he had made the correct choice in joining forces with Blanc. He found it possible to have amicable discussions with the Frenchmen on questions of socialist theory without their divergences over communism or religion marring their accord on practical, day-to-day matters, and he even concluded that he and Blanc were striving to build much the same kind of co-operative social order; The Communist

52. Ibid., MEGA I, 6, pp. 355-356; MECW, 6, p. 381.

League and Blanc, he informed Marx, were marching towards "le même but" and the principles enunciated in the first volume of Blanc's Histoire de la Révolution française "s'accordaient sous beaucoup de rapports avec les nôtres".⁵³ He continued, too, to be impressed by Ledru-Rollin, and by January he was again on friendly terms with Flocon and having good-natured debates with him about communist theory and the attachment of the French peasantry to private property.⁵⁴

The success of his collaboration with the Réformistes made the need to cultivate his contacts with other Parisian socialists seem less pressing to Engels. He dutifully distributed copies of The Poverty of Philosophy to everyone he could think of, reporting to Marx at the end of November that "tout le monde" had received a copy except Lamartine (who had left town) and Vidal (whose address he could not discover).⁵⁵ This done, he lapsed into a routine of writing his weekly copy for the paper and attending to the affairs of The Communist League. The Paris branch was not going too well; the basic problem, he wrote to Marx in January 1848, was the mentality of the German artisans, which was still impregnated with Weitlingism and Proudhonianism. The members of the League, he added, were a mixture of weary veterans and aspiring petty-

53. Engels to Marx, 25-26/10/47, CME, 1, p. 498.

54. Engels to Marx, 14/1/48, CME, 1, p. 513.

55. Engels to Marx, 23-24/11/47, CME, 1, p. 507.

bourgeois, and they still hankered after a recreation of the old compagnonnage system. What was worse, they obtained a living only by undercutting the French artisans with whom they were competing, which had the effect of reducing the French workers' wages. Engels wondered whether there was much hope of raising the consciousness of a band of men in these circumstances; he would have one more go at creating an active organisation, he told Marx, and if that did not work he would concentrate on working with the French.⁵⁶ By the middle of January, though, he was getting fed up with his new friend Blanc too, because Blanc kept putting off writing the review of The Poverty of Philosophy that he had promised. He had skimmed through Marx's book, he told Engels, and could see that Proudhon had been given a hammering, but he was behind schedule with his Histoire and overwhelmed with other obligations. The solution, he suggested, was for Engels himself to write the review, and he, Blanc, would make sure Flocon printed it. Engels agreed; this at least would ensure that Marx's work received some publicity in La Réforme, and he flattered himself he would give a more accurate account of Marx's insights than Blanc would have done.⁵⁷ He promised Marx he would write the review post-haste, but was apparently expelled from France before he got around to it.

56. Engels to Marx, 14/1/48, CME, 1, pp. 514-515.

57. Engels to Marx, 21/1/48, CME, 1, pp. 516-517.

Engels' main cause for dissatisfaction with La Réforme at the beginning of 1848 remained its economic policies. Neither Blanc nor any of the other Réformiste leaders really understood political economy, he charged, and this was the aspect of modern socialist theory where the Marx circle had a much more sophisticated grasp of reality. Blanc's ideas of economics were derived from Pecqueur and Vidal and he shared their moralistic conception of social science, whereas Ledru-Rollin was simply opposed to further industrialisation and claimed that a reorganisation of the existing productive forces would be sufficient to ensure everybody an adequate living standard. Engels had no patience with these views, and made fun of them in his letter to Marx. For tactical reasons he did not wish to cross swords in public with the Réformistes on these issues, but he suggested that Marx might, in a subtle way, take Blanc down a peg by means of a double-edged review of his Histoire de la Révolution in the Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung.⁵⁸ The second Congress of The Communist League in London and his discussions with Marx about the contents of the League's programme, which they were currently drafting, had made Engels more aware than he had been a few months before of the theoretical divergences between "modern communism" and red republicanism. But he still believed firmly in the need for an alliance between communists and social

58. Ibid., p. 517.

democrats, and he continued to defend La Réforme in the pages of The Northern Star. In an article printed in the Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung at the end of December he warmly praised La Réforme for being the only Parisian paper to defend the conspiratorial Société des communistes matérialistes when this was prosecuted by the government, and he declared fulsomely that the "modern communism" of the League was closer to the principles of the Réforme group than to Icarianism and other forms of utopian communism.⁵⁹ Marx, in the last section of the Manifesto, reiterated this judgment.⁶⁰ So, despite some reservations on both sides, the 'alliance' between the Réformistes and The Communist League remained in existence in February 1848, although the men at La Réforme were no doubt far too preoccupied with domestic events to give it much thought.

Engels himself was back in Brussels when the revolution broke out, and on hearing the news dashed to the railway station to interview eye-witnesses arriving from Paris. He hurriedly wrote up an article for the Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung in which he proclaimed that Paris had experienced not one but two revolutions: a power-struggle between different segments of the bourgeoisie, and a popular insurrection for a social Republic. The repudiation of the Guizot government

59. "Die Réforme und der National", Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, no. 104, 30/13/47, reprinted in MEGA I, 6, pp. 574-575; MECW, 6, pp. 406-408.

60. Manifest, MEGA I, 6, p. 536; MECW, 6, p. 518.

by the National Guard was the bourgeois revolution, he explained, and the fall of this ministry meant the end of "the exclusive rule of the Stock Exchange grandees". But it had been the workers who had erected the barricades, fought the Municipal Guard, and brought down the July Monarchy itself. Such a "brilliant success by the Parisian proletariat", he confessed, was more than he had dared hope for, and he was overjoyed to see that the Provisional Government contained not only Ledru-Rollin, Flocon and Blanc but also a worker, "for the first time in any country in the world". It was not a socialist government, he recognised, since the presence of men like Lamartine and Dupont de l'Eure ruled this out, but it was a democratic one. The victory of French republicanism, he exulted, would mean the eventual success of the democratic movement throughout the "whole of Europe; the 'age of democracy' was dawning", and the overt struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie had at last broken out on the continent. Nor was the battle yet over in Paris, he warned: there would be a "second act" to the drama in which the revolutionary workers would confront the French bourgeoisie. "The flames of the Tuileries and the Palais Royal are the dawn of the proletariat", he proclaimed, "Everywhere the rule of the bourgeoisie will now come crashing down, or be dashed to pieces".⁶¹

61. "Revolution in Paris", Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung, no. 17, 27/2/48, reprinted in WERKE, 4, pp. 528-530; MECW, 6, pp. 556-558.

The Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung made no secret of its enthusiasm for the new regime in France or of its hope that similar upheavals would occur in Belgium and Germany. Marx persuaded the Association démocratique of Brussels to send a telegram of congratulation to the Provisional Government, and Flocon replied in the name of the French Republic inviting the "good and loyal" citoyen Marx (who had been banished by the Guizot government) back to France.⁶² This flamboyant gesture actually proved very useful to Marx who was expelled from Belgium two days later, on March 3rd, by a frightened government anxious to forestall an insurrection. He hastily arranged to settle in Paris and to transfer the headquarters of The Communist League to the revolutionary capital while waiting to see if Germany responded to the French stimulus.⁶³ Engels, who had not been expelled from Belgium, remained in Brussels to salvage the Zeitung, so Marx sent him brief reports on the situation in the French capital. The Chartist leaders Jones and Harney were in Paris, he wrote, and so were the German leaders of the London branch of The Communist League. Flocon and the staff of La Réforme had a high opinion of Engels, he added, and had given him, Marx, a warm welcome. But clouds were darkening in the political sky because the bourgeoisie was regaining its nerve and becoming "terriblement insolente et réactionnaire".⁶⁴ Engels, following

62. "Adresse de l'Association démocratique de Bruxelles aux Membres du gouvernement provisoire de la République Française, 28/2/48", MEGA I, 6, pp. 653-654; MECW, 6, pp. 645-646; Ferdinand Flocon to Marx, 1/3/48, MECW, 6, p. 649.

63. "Beschluss der Zentralbehörde des Bundes der Kommunisten, 3/3/48", WERKE, 4, p. 607; MECW, 6, p. 651.

64. Marx to Engels, 12/3/48 and 16/3/48, CME, 1, pp. 522-523.

the Parisian events from Brussels, replied, blaming Lamartine for the Provisional Government's apparent lack of momentum. In all his speeches, he commented, Lamartine was concerned exclusively with pacifying bourgeois disquiet and reassuring all and sundry that the government's intentions were sane and moderate: small wonder, then, that the French bourgeoisie was plucking up its courage again.⁶⁵ He was anxious to get back to Paris and see for himself what was going on, and the last week in March saw him living once again in the French capital. He did not stay long, because news of revolution in Germany convinced him and Marx that their task was now to help bring democracy to the Rhineland, but during the last days of March he sent his cousin Emil Blank two vivid and informative letters about the situation in Paris.⁶⁶

Business was reviving again after the shock of the insurrection, he told Blank, the Parisian bourgeoisie had begun to viciously attack the Republican government, and it looked as though things were heading for a confrontation between them and the revolutionary populace. There were now three main 'parties' in Parisian politics, he explained: the bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeoisie, and the workers. To be sure, there were also some other smaller sects, like the legitimists and bonapartists, but these, though rich, had little popular support and no hope of taking over the government. The real struggle

65. Engels to Marx, 18/3/48, CME, I, p. 528.

66. Engels to Emil Blank, 20/3/48 and 25/3/48, CME, I, pp. 528-532.

was between the bourgeoisie and the ouvriers, with the petty-bourgeoisie playing a rather despicable intermediary role. The bourgeoisie was led, Engels continued, by the old conservative élite of bankers and large landowners but these had been joined by most of the moderate liberals: industrialists, wealthy merchants and stock-exchange speculators. This bourgeois coalition, he believed, was gaining in strength and was already able to exert considerable influence and financial pressure on the government; several members of the cabinet were sympathetic to its demands including, he thought, "ce charlatan de Lamartine". The second main 'party' was also a coalition, between "les petits-bourgeois" and "les classes moyennes" (by these latter Engels presumably meant the lower reaches of the bourgeoisie (wide usage), i.e., those members of the middle-class who had not joined the first 'party'). Led by Lamartine, Garnier-Pagès, and the group around Le National, it had the support of most of the National Guard, and also had a majority within the Provisional Government. Engels identified Marrast, Dupont de l'Eure, Marie and Crémieux as leading government politicians belonging to this coalition. The third main 'party', that of the workers, Engels saw as represented simply by "les gens de La Réforme" among whom he numbered Albert and Arago as well as Blanc, Flocon and Ledru-Rollin.⁶⁷

The Provisional Government thus included representatives of all three classes, and Engels saw its policies wavering indecisively between the demands of the workers and those of the

67. Ibid.

business community. The latter had mobilised the National Guard to protest government measures it disliked, and already Lamartine had been intimidated sufficiently to disavow publicly measures promised by Ledru-Rollin. The left-wing minority in the cabinet, however, also had considerable influence on government policy because of their popularity with the lower classes, and Engels reported with joy that on the 17th March 1848, 300 workers had marched on the Hôtel de Ville to demonstrate their confidence in Ledru-Rollin. At the moment, therefore, he judged that there was something of a political stalemate, a situation which was not too unsatisfactory because it meant that the bourgeoisie had failed in its attempt to oust the Réformistes from the government. Unfortunately, he continued, there was no real chance of any radical social reform despite the promises of the four Réformiste ministers and the desire of Lamartine and Marrast to wipe out unemployment and improve the educational system. The truth was that the government had been forced to make promises to the workers which it could never fulfil because it lacked the courage to take the financial measures required to find the money to pay for them. To finance its reform plans it would have to take "revolutionary" action against the wealthy: high progressive taxes, confiscation of emigres' property, and a ban on the export of capital, among others. Engels judged -- correctly -- that Lamartine and his friends were too cautious, and too dependent on the advice of orthodox financial 'experts', to

adopt a radical, dynamic approach to solving the Republic's monetary difficulties. Moreover, he recognised that a fourth, and relatively conservative 'party' would soon -- when the Constituents were elected in April -- be exerting pressure on the Provisional Government: that of the peasantry. The peasants, he pointed out, constituted five-sevenths of the French population, and he thought that most of them would probably support Lantier and his followers. The forthcoming election, he felt, would likely strengthen the government out of its crisis and the downfall of the Réformistes group. But he predicted that if Lantier and Lours-Rollin were ejected from the cabinet there would be another Parisian insurrection.⁶⁸

Lantier was thus sensitive to the difficult position in which the Réformistes in the government found themselves. They were unable to take energetic measures, he believed, but were hamstrung by a timid cabinet majority and an empty treasury. The government, though it probably had the support of a majority of the urban population, did not have the confidence of the bankers and businessmen who controlled the nation's financial and economic life. Hence the Réformistes had little chance of getting their plans implemented, yet they were reluctant to abandon the Republican ship to the incompetent and vacillating Lantier, who had already shown signs of caving in before bourgeois pressure. All they could do, he

68. Engels to Blank, 26/3/48, CME, I, pp. 531-532.

suspected, was to maintain the positions they had and push through as many reforms as they could frighten Lamartine into accepting. Engels considered that Ledru-Rollin was playing his poor hand very well: he was "le plus résolu et le plus radical" of the Réforme group. Louis Blanc, on the other hand, had cut a rather ridiculous figure because of his transparent vanity and penchant for "plans abracadabrants".⁶⁹ As for Flocon, Engels had completely forgotten his erstwhile disappointment with the man. Unlike Blanc, power had not changed him in the slightest, and he was still more than willing to chat with Engels, who described the old radical for Emil Blank:

le bonhomme habite comme par le passé un méchant appartement au cinquième étage, fume un caporal tout de qu'il y a de plus ordinaire dans une vieille pipe en terre, et s'est seulement acheté une nouvelle robe de chambre. Par ailleurs tout aussi totalement republicain dans sa façon de vivre que lorsqu'il était rédacteur à La Réforme, aussi amical, cordial et franc. C'est un des plus braves types que je connaisse.⁷⁰

Engels was thus still a fervent supporter of the Réformistes. But he was not at all sure what was going to happen to France in the next few months. He had strong doubts whether the Réforme group would be able to maintain their minority share of power after the coming elections, but he

69. Ibid., p. 531.

70. Ibid., p. 532.

did not expect these to bring stability and peace to France. Lamartine and his allies would probably stay in power, he predicted, but the government would remain caught in the cross-fire of class-struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat. If Ledru-Rollin and his supporters were dismissed from the cabinet, he pondered, the Parisian workers would most likely respond by manning the barricades again. Whether they would be successful he did not know, but in his heart he hoped they would.⁷¹ He had not faced up to the problem that the Réformistes, though committed ideologically to universal suffrage and parliamentary democracy, had the support of only a small percentage of the French population. He was reluctant to admit that the advent of democracy, in a country predominantly agrarian, would add to the political influence of a rural majority hostile to the violent tactics and economic interests of the urban workers he championed. This awkward fact upset the simple scenario he had worked out whereby, on the morrow of the democratic revolution, a popular workers' government would begin to legislate a series of gradual, but ultimately far-reaching, social reforms. Flocon had pointed out to him that in France a democratic government could not be a workers' government, but Engels, whose conception of future democratic politics was modelled on England rather than France,

71. Ibid.

had simply not come to terms with this difficulty.⁷² It was to confront him again when he resumed his involvement with the French socialist movement some two-and-a-half decades later. At the moment he had neither the time nor the inclination to think through the dilemma.

During these brief, crowded, exciting weeks in Paris in March and early April 1848, Marx and Engels did find occasion to visit Cabet at Le Populaire as well as the ministerial offices of their friends from La Réforme. They were on good terms with the Icarian chief now, and hoped that since the Revolution had scotched his emigration scheme, his group could be brought into relations with The Communist League.⁷³ Nevertheless, they continued to support Blanc, Flocon, Ledru-Rollin and the left-wing faction within the Provisional Government, and it is possible that Marx even joined and made speeches at one of the political clubs sponsored by the Réforme group, the Société des droits de l'homme.⁷⁴ But he and Engels could no

72. Engels to Marx, 14/1/48, CME, I, p. 513; Engels to Blank, 28/3/48, CME, I, p. 532.

73. Engels to Marx to Cabet, end of March 1848, CME, I, p. 533; Engels and Marx to Cabet, 5/4/48, CME, I, p. 538.

74. Marx's active participation in this political club during March 1848 has been asserted by Samuel Bernstein, "Marx in Paris, 1848: A Neglected Chapter", Science and Society, III (1939), pp. 323-355 & IV (1940), pp. 211-217. Bernstein's account has been challenged by P. Amann, "Karl Marx, 'quarante-huitard' français?" International Review of Social History, VI (1961), pp. 249-255. Amann argues that the 'citoyen Marx' who evidently took part in the sessions of the Société during these weeks could not have been Karl Marx because the latter was still in Belgium when the

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neither he nor Engels were to have any further direct contact with the French socialist movement until the days of the First International.

CONCLUSION

The thought of Marx and Engels up to 1842 can best be understood as a fusion of ideas and attitudes derived from the French Enlightenment with certain fundamental values inherited from German Romanticism. Both young men believed unquestioningly in progress, in the application of reason to human affairs, and in representative government, and their opposition to the Prussian autocracy led them to democratic republicanism. In Engels' case, reading B rner (a mouthpiece for Parisian Jacobinism) played an important role, whereas Marx's commitment to radical liberalism reflected the influence of Ruge and his experience at the Rheinische Zeitung. Equally important, both accepted the German Romantic critique of contemporary civilisation as immoral and dehumanising, and had internalised the Romantic ideal of a modern equivalent to the Greek polis in which the creative individual might find the lost spirit of co-operation and community required for the reintegration of his shattered personality.

After 1842, this Romantic liberalism was transformed by the two Germans' experiences abroad into 'utopian' socialism. Engels, suitably prepared by conversations with Weitling and

Hess and shocked by industrial England, was converted during the winter of 1842-43 to a mixture of Owenism and Chartism, which he subsequently rounded out with ideas borrowed from French socialists, notably Fourier. Marx's conversion, although begun by reading Rousseau, Considerant and Proudhon at Kreuznach, was substantially the work of Hess, Leroux and Blanc in Paris in the winter of 1843-44. By the fall of 1844 both men had transformed the content of their early views on the dehumanisation of modern man, and elaborated fairly comprehensive analyses of the material and psychological effects of commercialisation, urbanisation and industrialisation on the wage-labourer. They had also begun to give their respective socialisms the economic foundations that were initially lacking, Engels taking his ideas mainly from Owen and Fourier, Marx drawing on the Sismondian Buret and the ex-Saint-Simonians Leroux and Pecqueur. However, there was a crucial difference between their outlooks at this time: Marx's views were essentially a variant on French artisan socialism and he was hostile to communism, whereas Engels already accepted industrial technology and looked to the new factory proletariat to create a communitarian society along Owenite lines. But they agreed on the need for a comprehensive, normative social science (to include economics, history and social psychology) to counter utilitarianism, Malthusianism and classical political economy, which they denounced as apologies for the status quo.

Marx's intellectual debt to French socialism deepened

in the fall of 1844 as a result of meeting Proudhon, and had his planned work on economics been written at this time it would certainly have been cast in a neo-Sismondian mould. The Holy Family in any case revealed his high opinion of Proudhon, Sismondi and Fourier. His conversations with Engels in August-September 1844, his study of Ricardian economics, and his visit to Manchester in 1845 gave Marx the idea of fusing the French socialist critique of bourgeois society with a neo-Ricardian analysis of the laws operating in an industrial capitalist economy. He eventually sketched his revised views on economics in The Poverty of Philosophy and in the unpublished manuscript on "Wages" in which he also first formulated his 'law of capitalist economic development'. These works demonstrated that by 1847 he had repudiated Proudhon, Pecqueur and Sismondi, committed himself to a neo-Ricardian stand-point, and adopted a positivist view of the social science he still hoped to develop.

However, the continuing influence of French and English socialist theory on his and Engels' outlook was evident in The German Ideology and also in Engels' speeches and articles of 1845-47. The theory of history set out in The German Ideology was a synthesis of ideas derived from Peuchet, Owen, Sismondi and Saint-Simon (among others), while its authors' vision of a communist society drew, in particular, on Fourier, Owen and Proudhon. In the second volume of the work Marx defended Icarianism, enthusiastically championed

certain of Fourier's insights, and carefully evaluated the merits and demerits of Saint-Simonianism. By the end of 1847, the two Germans had straightened out their opinions on all the main currents of European socialism, had set out their conception of "modern communism", and had decided that the rival school most worthy of their co-operation was that headed by the Chartist left in England and La Réforme in France. They regarded their own brand of socialism as the logical extension of this social republicanism, and in any case believed that the road to a planned, egalitarian and libertarian community lay through universal suffrage and social reform legislation by a popular government. This perspective underlay Marx's critique of Proudhonian mutualism in The Poverty of Philosophy and also Engels' journalistic collaboration with La Réforme and The Northern Star.

It is now possible to make some judgments on the controversial issues of marxology mentioned in the Introduction, although my conclusions can only apply to Marx's and Engels' views in the 1840s. If my interpretation is correct, it is evident that the permanent influence of Hegelian and Feuerbachian philosophy on the content, as opposed to the language and form, of their ideas was relatively small from 1844 onwards (1843 in the case of Engels). Even in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts the substance of Marx's analysis derived from the Saint-Simonians, Pecqueur, Schulz, Smith and Buret, and he was trying to write a treatise on 'social economy' not an essay in speculative philosophy. Engels had independently

come up with very similar ideas, and he expressed them in a less rebarbative form in articles in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, and Vorwärts, and in The Condition of the English Working Class. The Holy Family, The German Ideology, and Engels' letters to Marx provide ample evidence that the two men consistently repudiated Hegelian metaphysics and neo-Hegelian philosophy of history as vapid and fraudulent. Their own excursions into historiography were initially written from a quasi-positivist standpoint, i.e., they were aiming at an empirical science which would avoid universal determinism and what they regarded as the superficiality of the Lockean intellectual tradition. By 1847 they appear to have discarded even these qualifications and come close, at least, to scientism.

If Hegel was not a major influence and if Ricardo did not become one until 1846, one must look to the French and English socialists as the main sources of early marxism. Engels' debts to Owen and Fourier were heavy, as, for example, his Elberfeld speeches demonstrated; the major influence on him politically was left-wing Chartism, as expressed by Harney and The Northern Star. Marx's thought was more eclectic, but out of the French socialists he read or met in 1844 one can single out Blanc and Proudhon since the former weaned him from liberalism while the latter helped convert him to socialism, stimulated his study of Sismondian economics, and gave him the idea that economic 'contradictions' were the motor of history. In 1845-46 he also took key ideas from Sismondi, Fourier, and the Saint-Simonians: his critique of the structural defects

of industrial capitalism derived from the Italian school, his ideals of joyous work and liberation of the personality were reinforced by Fourier, and the Saint-Simonians' glorification of the potential of industry played the same role in his thought as Owen's vision of industrial communes did in Engels'.

There is no doubt that Marx's opinions, and to a lesser extent Engels' too, changed during the 1840s. For example, Marx did switch his allegiance as an economist from the French neo-Sismondians to a neo-Ricardian version of classical political economy. He also revised his concept of human nature from an 'essentialist' picture to an 'existential' one which stressed the changeability of man in the course of history. He started off as a firm believer in free-will, by 1845 was searching for a media via between total free-will and determinism, and by 1847 had adopted universal determinism. Engels likewise changed his views on human nature, wavered in his attitude towards reformist politics, and had by 1847 abandoned his ethical and 'utopian' socialism for Marx's Ricardian scientism.

Although their views were in many respects similar and their intellectual evolution followed roughly similar paths, there were nevertheless significant differences between Marx's and Engels' opinions. They disagreed on particular issues like protectionism and the viability of agrarian communes, Engels was more sympathetic to anti-étatisme and to campaigns for social reforms, and, of course, it was Engels who first came to terms with industrial Britain, Owenism and Chartism.

He was the better writer, initially the more creative thinker, and made important personal contacts with men like Watts, Harney, Cabet, Blanc and Flocon. It would therefore be a serious mistake to regard him as merely a junior partner during this period.

Despite his Deutsch-Französische Jahrbucher essay, Engels never regarded himself as an expert on economics, and indeed his ideas were borrowed mainly from Smith, Fourier, and Owen. Marx, on the other hand, did have pretensions to originality, but they were scarcely justified, at least before 1847. His early approach was essentially a blend of Saint-Simonian, Proudhonian, and Sismondian doctrines, and his later views derived mainly from Ricardo and neo-Ricardians like Bray, although he apparently retained a Sismondian underconsumptionist interpretation of crises, and took his theory of economic 'contradictions' from Proudhon. He never set out his economic thought systematically before 1848, but he seems to have been working at a synthesis of French socialism and Ricardianism.

After his conversion to empiricism, Engels had no interest in philosophy and simply avoided philosophical issues in his books and articles. Marx recognised that his projected social science would require an epistemological foundation, and gave some thought in 1845 to a theory of knowledge, the free-will/determinism question, and to methodology. On the latter topic he rejected both post-Kantian Idealism and British

empiricism, accepting the need, in principle, for a 'dialectical' method which would be empirical but which would probe below the surface of phenomena. He never worked out precisely what this would be, and before 1848 had gotten no further than picking up some hints from Proudhon's Système des contradictions économiques. On the fact/value distinction he equivocated, apparently denying it in 1844 but probably accepting it when he converted to Ricardianism. His most thoughtful comments on epistemology and determinism were the Theses on Feuerbach, an attempt at a middle way between Idealism and materialism which he kept in mind while writing The German Ideology but subsequently forgot about.

The theory of history set out in The German Ideology was, on balance, non-determinist and non-monist, but by 1847 Marx had lapsed into economic determinism. Before 1848, however, his approach to history was never historicist (in Popper's usage); it was neither teleological nor inevitabilist, nor did Marx believe he had discovered a developmental law which would allow him to foretell the future. He and Engels did work out a general interpretation of European history since the feudal era and also a more detailed account of events since the French Revolution, but they regarded their work as straightforward empirical historiography and not as a 'philosophy' of history. To be sure, they thought there were good reasons for expecting a bourgeois-liberal revolution in Germany in the near future, and also a growing conflict between bourgeoisie and proletariat in France and England, but they tried

to ground these predictions in concrete analysis of contemporary political and economic questions. Engels, in particular, produced a steady stream of articles about contemporary European politics which reflected the viewpoint of the newspapers for which he wrote, The Northern Star and La Réforme.

Marx's and Engels' political views were in essence quite simple. They saw political change as occurring in stages: (i) the gradual defeat of the aristocracy by the bourgeoisie, (ii) the achievement of a republican democracy as a result of working-class pressure for universal suffrage, (iii) the gradual creation of a socialist society by a series of social and economic reforms legislated by the republican government, and (iv) the eventual transformation of the economy into a communal one, partly through further legislation, and partly through worker management of co-operative enterprises and state-owned factories. They had high hopes that the advent of universal suffrage would come peacefully in England, and that a popular government would simply be elected in the wake of another Great Reform Bill; elsewhere on the Continent they supposed that democratic republics would be installed by popular insurrections when the time was ripe. They expected that the right conditions for either a successful reform campaign or an insurrection would be created by an economic depression, but they had no 'breakdown theory' as such. While they expected

overproduction crises to persist and indeed worsen, they apparently did not conceive of the capitalist economy grinding to a halt, or, for that matter, evolving spontaneously into state socialism. In short, the revolution, if the intransigence of the bourgeoisie made it necessary, would be political, and would simply install a popular government elected by universal suffrage. Marx and Engels were thus revolutionary-reformists: their ultimate goal was a transformation of society, but their preferred means were legal reforms and they envisaged the process of change as gradual not cataclysmic.

When one recognises the extent of both men's intellectual debts to contemporary French and English socialists and economists, one is struck by the lack of originality in early marxism. There was nothing in either Marx's or Engels' writing before The German Ideology which had not already been said, and usually said more clearly, by either French or English socialists or both. At most they were helping a German audience catch up on foreign developments. Nor were the materials from which The German Ideology was constructed original, although arguably the synthesis was; however, the work was fragmented and ambiguous, which reduced its value. Engels' The Condition of the English Working Class, although in some respects a slapdash and unreliable compilation lacking internal consistency, was a work of substance, but it had been anticipated by a few other pioneer essays in the field of

industrial sociology. The Poverty of Philosophy scored some valid points against Proudhon, but in general was an ineffectual polemic which leaned heavily on Bray and Ricardo and which vulgarised the 'materialist conception of history' developed in The German Ideology. Moreover, none of these works came close to creating the new socialist social science which Marx and Engels believed was required. They probably already regarded their ideas as forming a comprehensive intellectual system, but they most certainly failed to set this down on paper in the 1840s. In two senses, then, there was no such thing as marxism before 1848: Marx's and Engels' thought was neither developed systematically nor very original.

EPILOGUE

After 1848 Marx and Engels had few contacts with the French left until the 1860s when the creation of the First International brought first Marx, and then later Engels too, into collaboration and conflict with disciples of Proudhon and followers of Bakunin. Not that they were indifferent to events in France during the 1850s, but other problems engaged their attention, and their limited literary output during these years included only a few articles on the politics of the Second Empire. Marx's influence on the French section of the I.W.A. was never great, and was less important than his personal impact on French socialist émigrés like Paul Lafargue and Eduard Vaillant. The split and disintegration of the First International gave him a bad press among French labour militants and socialist intellectuals in the 1870s, although this was in part counteracted by his notorious defence of the Paris Commune in the name of the General Council of the I.W.A. Mainly as a result of the efforts of Lafargue and Benoit Malon, Marx's theoretical work received some publicity in the French socialist press in the 1880s, and one party, led by Jules Guesde, adopted a programme co-authored by Marx and used Engels' Socialism Utopian and

Scientific as an ideological platform.

Marx died in 1883, but Engels lived for a further twelve years and during this time maintained close contact with Lafargue, seeking to minimise his doctrinal divergences and to influence the tactics of the Parti ouvrier. Lafargue did his best to get published French translations of what he considered to be the best of Marx's and Engels' writings, although his achievements were not spectacular. However, in the mid-1890s he was at last able to supplement the weekly Le Socialiste with a theoretical journal, L'Ere nouvelle, succeeded by Le Devenir social, and marxism began to receive more attention within the French socialist movement. In the 1890s important socialist politicians and intellectuals like Jean Jaurès and Georges Sorel studied the available works of Marx and Engels and incorporated elements of marxist thought into their own outlooks. They also challenged Lafargue's 'orthodox' Engelsian interpretation, so that by the end of the century a revisionist controversy had arisen in France analogous to that between Bernstein and Kautsky. One of the chief issues in this debate was whether marxism was an up-to-date synthesis of the best of earlier French socialism (as the pro-marxists claimed) or an alien, Germanic import (as its opponents maintained).

Of course, when French socialists of the 1890s and 1900s talked of marxism they had no knowledge of many of Marx's and Engels' early writings, and tended to regard Capital and Anti-Duhring as the most elaborate statements of the

doctrine. They also concentrated their attention on the simpler, shorter accounts to be found in The Communist Manifesto, the "Preface" to Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy, and Socialism utopian and scientific. This focus on certain texts, plus the influence of Lafargue's positivist and Darwinian interpretation, created a picture of 'original marxism' quite different from that suggested in this thesis. Moreover, the discovery in the 1920s and 1930s of early Marxian manuscripts coincided with a Hegel-revival among left-wing French intellectuals, resulting in a neo-Hegelian interpretation of 'original marxism' equally far from the truth. During most of the interwar period it was fashionable among French Marxist-Leninists to contrast the alleged utopianism of the indigenous French socialist tradition with 'scientific socialism', and hence the French sources of marxism were, by and large, swept under the carpet. Only during the Popular Front and, especially, during Tripartism after the Second World War, did French marxist intellectuals begin to rediscover the origins of their Weltanschauung in the ideas of the French socialists of the 1830s and 1840s. And even then, the account provided by P.C.F. militants like Garaudy was superficial and inaccurate. Perhaps, at last, a more balanced perspective is now possible.

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